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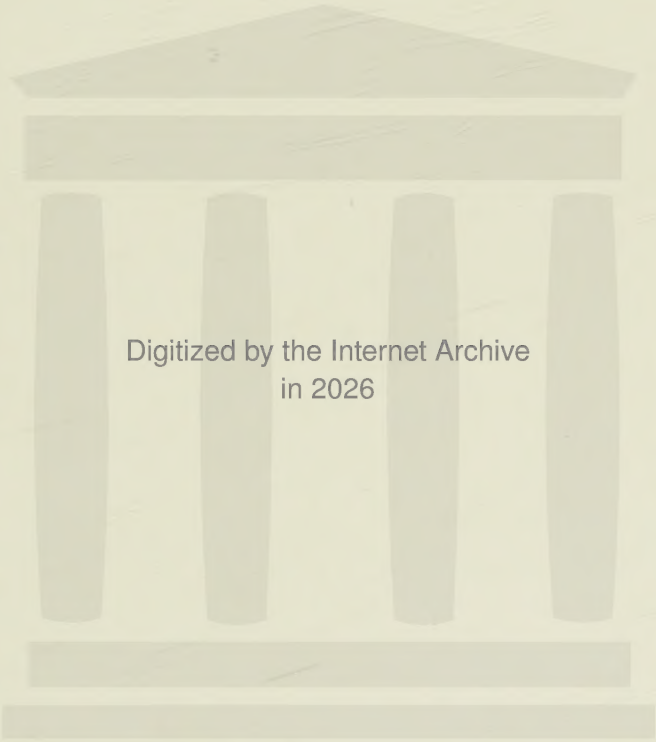
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THE LIFE OF
JOHN WESLEY

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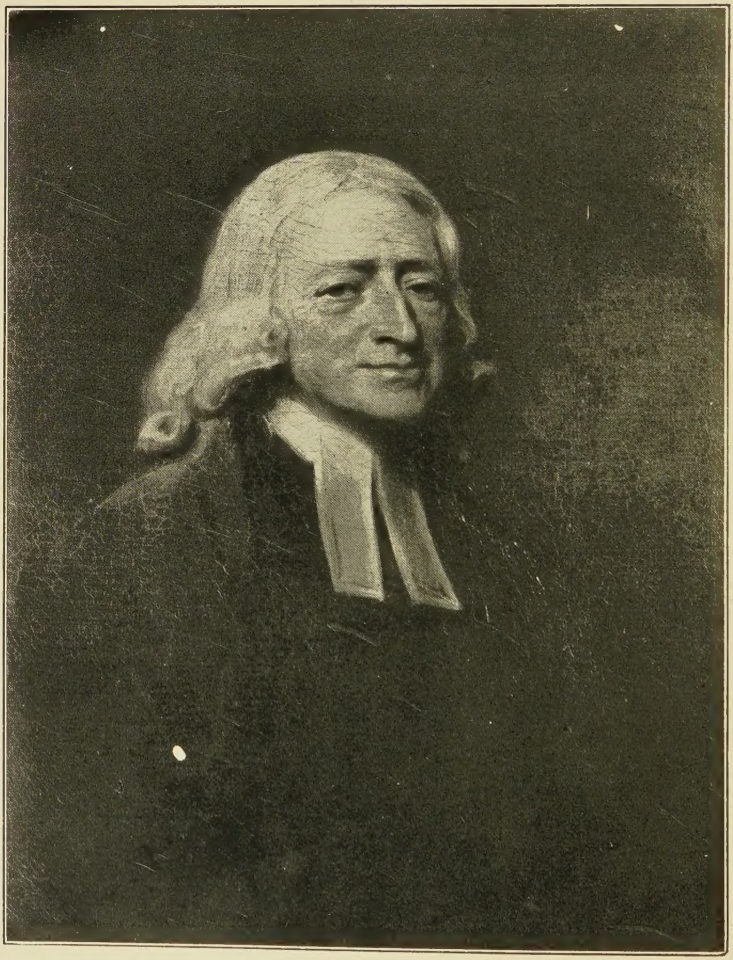

JOHN WESLEY.

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THE LIFE OF

JOHN WESLEY

BY

C. T. WINCHESTER
PROFESSOR OF ENGLISH LITERATURE IN
WESLEYAN UNIVERSITY

WITH PORTRAITS

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To

MY WIFE

PREFACE

A WORD of justification is due from any one who presumes to add another to the already numerous Lives of John Wesley.

The early biographers — except Southey — and most of the later ones have written as Methodists for Methodists. With that great religious movement of which Wesley was the leader, I have the most hearty sympathy; but I have endeavored to consider his work without narrowing denominational bias, and have emphasized certain important phases of his character that have often received comparatively little attention. Wesley was, indeed, primarily the religious reformer; but he is surely to be remembered not merely as the Methodist, but as the man, — a marked and striking personality, energetic, scholarly, alive to all moral, social, and political questions, and for some thirty years probably exerting a greater influence than any other man in England. I have ventured to hope that the story of such a life, told in moderate compass, may still be of interest to the general reader as well as to the student of religious history.

I am, of course, indebted to the older Lives of Wesley by Clarke, Watson, Moore, and Southey, and to the later ones by Stevens, Lelièvre, Overton, and Telford; while the laborious and monumental

work by Tyerman is a vast storehouse of facts to which all subsequent biographers must resort. Yet, after all, his own Journal and Letters will always remain the best, almost the only needful, authority for the life of Wesley; it is upon them that this book is chiefly based.

Two papers upon Wesley, by the present writer, appeared in the *Century Magazine* for July and August, 1903; by the kind permission of the Century Company, a few paragraphs from these papers are inserted, without essential change, in the following pages.

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JOHN WESLEY

CHAPTER I

PARENTAGE AND YOUTH

THE little market town of Epworth lies on the slope of a gentle eminence rising from the midst of that part of Lincolnshire which, because bounded on three sides by three little rivers and on the fourth by a canal, is called the Isle of Axeholme. As one stands in the churchyard, at the summit of the hill, the eye ranges for miles, in every direction, over a flat but fertile country, cut into green squares of wheat and pasture land. At the beginning of the eighteenth century the region had but recently been redeemed from the fens, and at its borders, near the sluggish streams, was still little better than a swamp, sodden and malarious. Its people were much below even the average of English rural intelligence at that time, heavy and lumpish, yet turbulent and without the stolid respect for order and tradition usually found in a long-settled community. The majority of them, unlike most English country folk at that day, were Whigs, not Tories, and had little reverence for the parson or the squire. Few of them could read or write; their manners were boorish, their speech vulgar and profane, their domestic morals corrupt. Of religion, even of its outward and conventional observances, they were for the most part

quite oblivious; many of the children born in the parish were never presented by their parents for baptism, and there were seldom as many as twenty communicants at the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper. To this uninviting parish came, at the beginning of the year 1697, the Reverend Samuel Wesley, then in his thirty-fifth year, bringing with him his wife and four children, the youngest an infant in arms. And in the rectory here was born, June 28, 1703, his most famous son, John Wesley.

Samuel Wesley, rector of Epworth, came of priestly line. His grandfather, Bartholomew, and his father, John, were both Oxford men and clergymen, though it seems probable that John never received Episcopal ordination. During the troublous times of the Commonwealth, both were in sympathy with the Puritan cause, and both were ejected from their living by the Act of Uniformity in 1662. Bartholomew Wesley lived to a ripe old age, supporting himself by the practice of physic after the church was closed to him; but John, who was subjected to repeated imprisonments after his ejection, broke down under the hardships of his lot, and died at the early age of thirty-four. From both grandfather and father Samuel Wesley inherited the sturdy personal independent character of the Wesley stock. His mother, to whom through her long widowhood he was tenderly devoted, was a daughter of the scholarly Puritan, John White, a member of the Westminster Assembly and one of the original patentees of the Massachusetts Colony. She was also a niece of that witty divine, Samuel Fuller, and it is perhaps this strain in his blood that accounts for the quaint humor of her son.

With such parentage and traditions it might have seemed improbable that Samuel Wesley would ever take orders in the Established Church. His mother had no such expectation, and, with the aid of some friends, sent him when he was eighteen to the famous academy of Mr. Martin on Newington Green, with the pious hope to see him a dissenting minister. But the young man seems to have found neither the teaching nor the temper of Mr. Martin's academy much to his liking, and was prompted by the bitter controversial spirit which prevailed there to examine for himself dispassionately the grounds of nonconformity. The result was that he decided to go to the University and prepare himself for orders in the Established Church. Knowing that this decision was likely to be painful to his mother, he kept his own counsel, and after praying long over the matter, rose early one morning, took his clothing in a bundle, and with forty shillings in his pocket, tramped to Oxford and entered himself as a servitor in Exeter College. Shortly after receiving his Bachelor's degree in 1688, he received orders, and after a year in London, a curacy, and nearly a year as chaplain on a man-of-war, he was recommended to the little parish of South Ormsby in Lincolnshire. He had married a few months before, and here, with his young wife,

"In a mean cot composed of reeds and clay,"

on an income of fifty pounds a year, "and one child additional per annum," he lived until his removal to Epworth.

Life in the Epworth rectory, though not so narrow as at Ormsby, to a man of Samuel Wesley's tastes and

aspirations could not have been easy. His income was now only about a hundred and fifty pounds a year; his family was large — "nineteen children in twenty-one years," as he told his bishop — and the rector, who was doubtless a little deficient in worldly prudence, once at least knew the inside of a debtor's jail. His parishioners, perhaps as ignorant and brutal a set of half-heathen as could have been found in England, disliking his politics, vexed and harassed him, burned his crops and hocked his cattle, and finally burned down his rectory. But the stout little man could not be soured or disheartened. He stuck to his post, and by cheerful performance of his duty at last lived down their prejudice and won a surly confidence. As to fear, whether of mobs or lords, he never knew what that meant. When a young man just out of the University, sitting one day in a London coffee-house, he saw a colonel of the Guards swagger in, swearing like the proverbial trooper, — "Here," said young Wesley, calling to the waiter, "take this glass of water to the man in the red coat and ask him to wash his mouth out." When the coarse mistress of the Marquis of Normandy, patron of the living in his South Ormsby parish, persisted in calling upon his wife, he took the obnoxious visitor by the arm and turned her out of doors — and then resigned his living.

He had a blunt independence, a promptness — sometimes a rashness — of decision, and a habit of obstinate defence of whatever he thought right. Always interested in public affairs, he had written, when just out of the University, the first pamphlet published in England in support of the Revolution settlement of 1688. When his wife, who did not share his loyalty

to the Prince of Orange, persistently refused to say Amen to his morning prayer for the king, "Sukey," said the emphatic rector, "Sukey, if we are to have two kings, we must have two beds," and mounting his horse rode away to London, where he stayed till the death of King William next year removed the cause of difference.[1] But, like many of his brethren of the Clergy, though a Whig under King William, he was a Tory under Queen Anne; and when the famous trial of Dr. Sacheverell came on, it was he — so his son John affirms — who wrote for that bumptious parson the famous speech he delivered before the House of Lords.

He coveted chiefly, however, the still air of delightful studies, and carried with him from the University to his remote Lincolnshire parish the tastes and habits of a scholar. His *magnum opus*, a Commentary on the Book of Job, though rather curious than valuable, is a monument of patient industry and research. Through all his early life he was ambitious of poetic honors also. While an undergraduate in the University he had gained a few honest shillings by publishing a thin volume of boyish rhymes which had at all events the merit of originality. At South Ormsby he wrote a sounding epic upon the life of Christ, put into a folio volume and dedicated to Queen Mary. Three years later came a still bigger volume on the history of the Old and New Testaments, inscribed to Queen Anne. And

[1] This, at all events, is the story as John Wesley told it. See *Methodist Magazine*, 1784, p. 606. But Mr. Tyerman, the biographer of both Samuel and John Wesley, rather scandalized by such conduct, is careful to remind us that the rector had business in London at that time as a member of Convocation, and that, as Convocation met December 31, and King William died on the 8th of the following month, his absence from his family need not have been very protracted.

when, in 1705, all England was ringing with the praises of Marlborough and Blenheim, Wesley was one of the loudest of the chorus of poets who celebrated that famous victory. His verses, first and last, were doubtless rather poor verses, just good enough to be damned by Swift in the "Battle of the Books" — where Wesley is despatched by a kick from the steed of Homer — and later by Pope in the "Dunciad." But, at all events, he cherished the poetic impulse, and transmitted it to all three of his sons. He was, withal, a genial man, with a quick enjoyment of all the humors of life, loved a moderate pipe and kindly talk, told a story capitally, and in spite of his occasional obstinacy must have been a delightful companion.

But although the rector of Epworth was always interested in both politics and letters, he always accounted both subservient to his work as parish priest. He brought to this work an earnest and active piety too rare in the English Church of that day. His lot was cast in a remote hamlet of the Lincolnshire fens, among a boorish folk who despised his learning and his piety. And here he labored for forty years, instructing, reproving, exhorting, visiting from house to house, knowing every soul in his charge by name, till he lived to see the number of his communicants increased tenfold, "not a papist or dissenter in the parish," and the moral tone of the community cleansed and elevated. And the heroic energy of the man dreamed of far wider fields. He was one of the very first Englishmen to urge active effort for the conversion of the heathen, and offered, if provision should be made for his family, to go alone as a pioneer missionary to the far East. His last words of hope for his own country must have been re-

called by his sons, in after years, with the solemn force of prophecy, — "Charles," said the dying man to the son at his bedside, "be steady; the Christian faith will surely revive in these Kingdoms. You shall see it, though I shall not."

But the dominant influence in the Epworth rectory was not that of the rector, but of his wife. Susanna Wesley was a woman to be regarded with some awe —

> "nobly planned
> To warn, to comfort and command."

Lacking in humor, perhaps deficient also in the softer and more distinctively feminine graces, she had instead a remarkable dignity and poise of character. In clearness and force of intellect, in practical judgment, in deliberative steadiness of purpose, she was unquestionably the superior of her husband. A daughter of the great Dr. Annesley, the "St. Paul of nonconformity," — she was his twenty-fifth child, — at the early age of thirteen she had gone over for herself all the arguments for dissent, and deliberately decided to enter the Church of England. At least so the biographers say; but it may be reasonably conjectured that the acquaintance with young Samuel Wesley, who was just then making a similar change, may have had something to do with her decision.

It is certain, however, that Susanna Wesley was always accustomed to do her own thinking. Her union with her husband was one of singular beauty and loyalty; but it did not imply any tame conformity of opinion, and she evidently found difficulty now and then in harmonizing her logical conclusions with her theory of wifely obedience. When Mr. Wesley, during one of his

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long absences in London in attendance upon Convocation, ventured to remonstrate with her for having gathered a company in the rectory of a Sunday evening in a way dangerously near a violation of the Conventicle Act, she gave him her reasons for the meeting, — and very good reasons they were, — but concluded, "If you do, after all, think fit to dissolve this assembly, do not tell me that you *desire* it, but send me your positive command." Mr. Wesley did not send it.

On political matters they were seldom in accord. If Mrs. Wesley refused to say Amen to the rector's prayer for King William, her refusal was entirely consistent with her opinions. In some papers, not yet published in full, she wrote, "Whether the praying for a usurper and vindicating his usurpation after he had the throne be not participating his sins, is easily determined."[1] She disapproved of the War of the Spanish Succession, which her husband had celebrated in his resonant poem on the Blenheim victory, and when a day of fasting and prayer for the success of the English arms was appointed, she declined to join in the public worship. "Since I am not satisfied of the lawfulness of the war, I cannot beg a blessing on our arms till I can have the opinion of one wiser and a more competent judge than myself in this point; namely, whether a private person that had no hand in the beginning of the war but did always disapprove of it may, notwithstanding, implore God's blessing on it, and pray for the good success of those arms which were taken up, I think, unlawfully."[1]

It would appear that she did not think her husband a qualified judge on this point of conscience. To her

[1] Kirk, "The Mother of the Wesleys," p. 189.

son John in Oxford, years afterwards, she wrote, "'Tis a misfortune almost peculiar to our family that your father and I seldom think alike." When they thought differently, it is hardly probable that Mrs. Wesley often found the logic of her husband convincing. That the happiness of their married life was quite undisturbed by a variance of opinion so frequent and so pronounced, is certainly a proof of mutual respect as well as of deep affection.

The education of the children was almost entirely intrusted to Mrs. Wesley. She began it in the cradle. Before they were a year old the babes of the Wesley family were taught "to fear the rod and cry softly," so that, although the rectory was as full of children as a hive is of bees, it was quiet as a Quaker meeting-house. As the children emerged from infancy, their hours of work and play, their habits of dress, manners, speech, were all regulated by strict rule, and instant obedience was always required. "The first thing to be done with children," said Mrs. Wesley, "is to conquer their will." She mentions as a proof of the thoroughness with which this was done in her own flock, that when they were ill, "there was no difficulty in making them take the most unpleasant medicine." In all their household ways and speech the mother insisted upon the courtesies of gentle life; and it was a grief to her that the children, when, by the burning of the rectory, they were for a time dispersed among the families of the parish, learned there a clownish accent and a rudeness of manner which it took great pains to correct. At the age of five came the solemn day when every child was taught his letters in one day of six hours, and next morning began his reading lessons with the first verse of the first chapter

of Genesis. She was the most tireless of teachers. "Sukey," said the rector to her one day, "I wonder at your patience. You have told that child twenty times the same thing." "Had I satisfied myself with mentioning the matter only nineteen," replied his wife, "I should have lost all my labor. You see it was the twentieth time that crowned the whole." The religious training of the children, of course, received her most careful attention. She prepared for them an admirably clear body of explanation upon the Catechism and the Creed, and she was accustomed to meet them separately once a week, at a specified time, for an hour of religious conversation and instruction. Long afterward, John Wesley, when a Fellow of Lincoln College, wrote to his mother begging her to give him an hour of her thought and prayer every Thursday evening, as she used to do when he was a boy at home.

If to this laxer age Mrs. Wesley's system of parental discipline seem unwisely rigid, it should be said that her patience was so exhaustless and all her requirements so evidently dictated by love, that her children never rebelled, but retained a grateful recollection of the rectory life all their days. Certainly to her favorite son, who was to be her greatest, this training was of the utmost importance. John Wesley was the son of his mother. From her he inherited his logical cast of mind, his executive capacity, his inflexibility of will, his union of independence of judgment with respect for authority, his deep religious temper. And all these characteristics were developed and fixed by his early training. His precision and order, his gift of organization and mastery of details, his notions of education, even some specific rules and customs of his religious

societies, can be traced to his mother's discipline. It is often said that Methodism began in the University of Oxford; with more truth it might be said that it began in Susanna Wesley's nursery.

In this atmosphere of strict but cheerful discipline, both intellectual and religious, John Wesley passed his boyhood. He was the fifteenth of nineteen children, of whom, however, only ten survived the period of infancy. Of the ten, three were sons; and upon them the hopes of their parents — especially of the father — were centred. The daughters of the Epworth rectory, indeed, received a better education than most young women of that time could boast; one of them, the high-spirited and wilful Hetty, could read her Greek Testament and served as her father's amanuensis before she was in her teens, and in later life contributed poems to the *Gentleman's Magazine* which certainly compare very well with most of the verse printed there. But the plans and efforts of the rector, it is evident, were mostly given to his boys. He bore the privations of his lot cheerfully, and insisted that the other members of the family should bear them too, in order that he might secure for his sons a liberal education and open to them a career. The eldest, Samuel, thirteen years older than John, was educated at Westminster and Christ Church, Oxford; and by the time his younger brother was ready to go up to school and university, he had taken orders and was occupying a position of some responsibility and influence as Head Usher in Westminster School. He would probably have risen to higher positions in the Church, had not the Tory party, with which he was in active sympathy, gone out of power at the death of Anne, and his friend and patron, Bishop Atterbury,

fallen into disgrace. As it was, he enjoyed for years the friendship of a circle that included such names as Harley, Atterbury, Pope, and Prior, and was himself an excellent scholar and no mean poet.

Of the early boyhood of John Wesley only one incident is recorded. On a February night in 1709 the rectory was burned. Fifteen minutes after the fire was discovered, the slight, thatch-roofed structure was consumed. The family, hurrying out in terror, left the boy John sleeping in his attic chamber; and he was taken out through a window only an instant before the blazing roof fell in upon his bed. Wesley always retained a vivid recollection of the scene, and more than half a century later, when, thinking himself near death, he composed his epitaph, he describes himself as "a brand plucked from the burning." His mother deemed his rescue a providential indication that her son was preserved for some great work, and resolved, as she says, "to be more particularly careful of the soul of this child that Thou hast so mercifully provided for." There is, however, no evidence of anything precocious in the religious development of the boy, but only a certain staid over-deliberateness which he got from his mother, but which to the more mercurial temperament of the father seemed, in a lad not yet in his teens, half amusing and half vexatious. "Sweetheart," said the rector to his wife, "I profess I think our boy Jack wouldn't attend to the most pressing necessities of nature unless he could give a reason for it."

In enumerating the early influences upon Wesley one must not omit a mention of the famous "Epworth noises," though they occurred after he had left home for the Charterhouse School in London. Through the

months of December, 1716, and January, 1717, the family were disturbed by strange sounds, which they all attributed to some supernatural agency. These sounds were generally those of knocking upon doors and upon the floor or ceiling of a room where some members of the family were sitting; sometimes there was a noise as of a heavy chain clanking, the breaking of crockery, the jingling of money upon the floor, a heavy tread on the stair, or the sweep as of some trailing garment along the floor. Repeatedly the latch of a door was lifted as one of the family was about to enter; and one evening a bed on which one of the girls was seated was observed to rise bodily from the floor. The rector himself for the first fortnight heard nothing, and his family, fearing the noises might portend some disaster to him, refrained from mentioning them in his presence. When, however, he learned of them and attempted an investigation of the cause, he was made the object of special attention by the mysterious visitant, and not only heard the knockings constantly, but felt sure that he was thrice forcibly pushed by an invisible power against his desk, or the side of a door which he was entering. The disturbances were so constant and lasted so long that the family seem to have lost their fear of them, and the younger girls found amusement in hunting "old Jeffery," as they called their goblin, from one room to another. When Jeffery, who seemed to have Jacobite sympathies, was especially noisy at the reading of the morning prayers for King George, the stout rector read those prayers over three times and bade him do his worst.

The independent and circumstantial accounts of these strange occurrences given in the journal of the rector and the letters of different members of the family

to the sons Samuel and John prove that some strange noises were certainly heard, not only by all the members of the household, but by at least one other competent witness — a Mr. Hoole, rector of the adjoining parish, whom Mr. Wesley called in — and that the rector made careful efforts to discover the cause without result. The family were naturally a little too ready to ascribe them to supernatural agency. Yet it must be admitted that it is difficult to explain phenomena attested by so many trustworthy persons and extending over so long a period as due to pure hallucination; and almost equally difficult, on the other hand, to imagine by what trickery the sounds could have been produced, or, if there was trickery, what could have been the motive of the trickster. It must be said that the matter has never yet been satisfactorily explained.[1] The most important thing to notice here, however, is that young John Wesley was fully persuaded that the whole disturbance could have no other than a supernatural cause. He was, indeed, at a loss to assign any motive for this irruption of the nether world in his father's household, and could only suggest that it might be a penalty upon the rector for his rash separation from his wife so many

[1] The latest examination of the story is that given in Podmore's "Modern Spiritualism," Vol. I, Ch. II. Mr. Podmore, though he has no definite explanation to offer, thinks there is little trustworthy evidence for anything except the knockings, and is evidently inclined to believe these were produced by some member of the household. He regards it suspicious that the knockings usually seem to have been associated with one of the daughters, Hetty, to have followed her about, and have been loudest near her; and yet that Hetty, though nineteen at the time, was the one of the elder daughters who never wrote to her brothers about the noises, nor made any mention of them to any one.

It is doubtful, however, whether most readers can believe on such evidence that Hetty Wesley played the *poltergeist* in this mystery.

years before, — a theory which, as Jeffery was very impartial in his attentions, would hardly seem to fit the facts. But the mysterious occurrences not only fixed thus early in John Wesley's mind a just belief in some realities beyond our positive knowledge, but they go far to account for that vein of credulity in the man which even his most partial admirers must admit.

In January, 1714, on the nomination of the Duke of Buckingham, an old friend of his father, John Wesley was entered as a gown-boy in the Charterhouse School, London. He remained there till he went up to Christ Church College, Oxford, in June of 1720, as an exhibitioner from the Charterhouse. It is pleasant to be able to associate Wesley's name with this venerable school so redolent of memories of Addison, Steele, and Thackeray; but his years there, as well as those of his undergraduate life in Oxford, are without important record. Unlike his younger brother Charles, who, when at Westminster School a few years later, won the captaincy of the school by his pluck as a fighter, John Wesley would seem to have been of a quiet temper, and in the early years of his stay at the Charterhouse had to submit to many of those exactions which the British schoolboy has always imposed upon his juniors. He used to say that for years he hardly knew the taste of animal food, as the elder boys ate all the meat at table; but to this deprivation he ascribed, in great measure, the good health of his later years. We may be sure he made good use of his time. Samuel, the Usher of Westminster School, who naturally exercised a kind of supervision over both his younger brothers and assisted them in their studies, wrote home to the anxious father, in 1719, "Jack is a brave boy, learning Hebrew as fast as

he can." And the master of the Charterhouse School, the venerable Dr. Thomas Walker, who in the forty years of his service there had trained Steele and Addison and a goodly number of other men afterward eminent in church or state, is said to have been specially attracted by the industrious habits and the quiet dignity of the lad from Epworth. But it is not likely that John Wesley, even in his boyhood, was ever without a wholesome sense of personal independence. In the last year of his residence at the Charterhouse he called on the famous Dr. Sacheverell with a letter of introduction from his father who had been of service to the Doctor in his trial ten years before. "I found him alone," said Wesley, in telling the story many years later, to Alexander Knox, "as tall as a maypole and as proud as an archbishop. I was a very little fellow, not taller" — pointing to a very gentlemanlike but very dwarfish clergyman who was in the company — "than Mr. Kenedy there. He said, 'You are too young to go to the University — you cannot know Greek and Latin yet; go back to school.' I looked at him as David looked at Goliath, and despised him in my heart. I thought, if I do not know Greek and Latin better than you, I ought to go back to school indeed. I left him, and neither entreaties nor commands could have again brought me back to him."

It has been said that he lost his religion at school. His biographer, Mr. Tyerman, asserts in solemn epigram, "John Wesley entered the Charterhouse a saint and left it a sinner"; which is nonsense. There is no foundation for the charge save a statement by Wesley, made in 1738, which does not justify any such interpretation. The boy who passes from the guarded seclu-

sion of a pious home to the temptations of a great public school is liable to feel his principles put to rude test; but if the boy reads his Bible and says his prayers every day, as John Wesley affirms he did, takes the Sacrament with devout regularity, and keeps in constant and absolutely frank correspondence with the solicitous love of his parents, that boy is not growing from a saint into a sinner. Wesley's letters to his mother, while they make little mention of specifically religious matters, show "Jacky," as his mother calls him, to be a sprightly, pure-minded, affectionate lad. The truth is that during his stay at the Charterhouse and the earlier years in Oxford, his character was ripening in healthy wise for the decision soon to come with opening manhood. Certainly his life at the Charterhouse was not unpleasant in memory. When in London, in later years, he would often look into the dingy little court, and recall the days when he used to run round it three times every morning for exercise, as his father had bidden him.

CHAPTER II

OXFORD AND GEORGIA

Wesley was admitted as a Commoner at Christ Church, Oxford, on July 13, 1720. He had just completed his seventeenth year. Oxford in the first half of the eighteenth century was hardly a school either for scholars or for saints. Its utter lack of intellectual discipline is attested by such accounts as those given in Gibbon's "Memoirs" and Adam Smith's "Wealth of Nations"; while as to its religion, we may remember that a little group of earnest men could not perform some of the plainest duties of Christianity without being exposed to the jeers of a majority of their fellow-students. Of Wesley's life at Christ Church little is known; but there is no evidence that he ever fell into the idleness or vice too characteristic of the Oxford undergraduate of his day. From some of the temptations that beset more wealthy Oxford men, he was doubtless saved by his poverty. His Charterhouse scholarship gave him forty pounds a year; but that was hardly enough to supply the needs even of a thrifty Commoner. His father in those years was passing through his worst financial straits, and it is evident from the letters of both father and mother that it was only by the severest economies that the family at Epworth were able to meet John's moderate requests for money. "Dear Jack," writes his mother, "be not discouraged;

do your duty, keep close by your studies, and hope for better days. Perhaps notwithstanding all, we shall pick up a few crumbs for you before the end of the year." He certainly must have kept close to his studies; for he did a deal of work during his five years at Christ Church, and formed there those studious habits and scholarly tastes which he carried through life. Nor do the occasional glimpses we get of him in those years indicate that he was often discouraged. He turned his hand now and then to writing verses which show no depression, and of which it may at least be said that they were as good as his father wrote at that age. One of his Christ Church friends describes him as "a very sensible, active collegian, baffling every man by the subtleties of his logic, and laughing at them for being so easily routed; a young fellow of the finest classical tastes, of the most liberal and manly sentiments, gay and sprightly with a turn for wit and humour." [1]

It is probably true that, though an earnest and serious young man, he gave comparatively little thought, at this time, to his personal religious condition. When looking back over his life in later years, he said of this period, with that rigor of self-criticism so characteristic of him: "I still said my prayers, both in public and private, and read with the Scriptures several other books of religion, especially comments on the New Testament. Yet I had not all this while so much as a notion of inward holiness; nay, went on habitually, and for the most part very contentedly, in some one or other known sins, though with some intermissions and short struggles, especially before and after the holy Communion, which I was obliged to receive thrice a

[1] *Westminster Magazine*, 1774, p. 180, quoted by Telford.

year." But even on his own showing it is evident there was nothing flippant or dissolute in the life he remembers; at worst only that carelessness so natural to the buoyant years between seventeen and twenty-one.

But the year 1725 marks the beginning of a new chapter in the religious life of Wesley. He had passed his majority. Up to this time he seems to have had no definite plans as to the work of his life, though his parents doubtless had expected him to go into the Church. But as the time approached when he must make his decision, he was led to examine more seriously the grounds of his belief, and to consider earnestly whether his own religious experience would warrant him in assuming the responsibilities of a Christian minister. He read for the first time two of the world's great books of religion, the "Imitation of Christ" and Jeremy Taylor's "Holy Living and Dying." His active, independent spirit deemed some of the counsels of the "Imitation" too narrowly ascetic — as they are — and he revolted against its predestinarian theology; but both books opened to him a new view of the demands and privileges of the inner religious life. "I began," he says, "to alter the whole form of my conversation, and to set out in earnest upon a new life. I set apart an hour or two a day for religious retirement; I communicated every week; I watched against all sin, whether in word or deed." Through the early months of 1725 he was making up his mind to take orders. His father, at first, counselled delay, cautioning him not to enter the priest's office to have a piece of bread; but the mother, with better knowledge of her son, felt sure that he would never take such obligations upon himself from

unworthy motives, and warmly advised him to take deacon's orders as soon as he might. In the autumn the decisive step was taken; he was ordained deacon by Bishop Potter, September 17, 1725.

In March of the following year, 1726, Wesley was elected Fellow of Lincoln College. The fellowship, which was open only to candidates from Lincolnshire, had been vacant for nearly a year; and Samuel Wesley, whose scanty income was sorely taxed to meet the needs of his son, had made earnest efforts throughout the summer of 1725 to secure it for John. He now wrote with proud satisfaction to him, "Dear Mr. Fellow Elect of Lincoln," though he has only five pounds to keep his family until after harvest, "What will be my own fate, God only knows. *Sed passi graviora.* Wherever I am, my Jack is fellow of Lincoln. I wrote to Dr. King, asking leave for you to come one, two, or three months into the country, where you shall be gladly welcome." Obtaining this leave of absence, Wesley spent the summer at home, returning to assume his duties in Lincoln College at the beginning of the October term.

Wesley began his distinctively academic work in Lincoln with a characteristic method and vigor that might have shamed the indolence of the average Oxford man. "Leisure and I," he writes his mother, "have parted company;" they never met again. He laid down a scheme of work for every day. Mondays and Tuesdays he gave to Greek and Latin; Wednesdays to logic and ethics; Thursdays, to Hebrew and Arabic; Fridays, to metaphysics and natural philosophy; Saturdays, to oratory and poetry; Sundays, to divinity. Within six weeks after his return to Oxford he had

been appointed Greek lecturer — reading a lecture on the Greek Testament once a week to the undergraduates — and Moderator of the classes. This last office was one of very considerable influence, and was a recognition of the logical quickness and acumen of this young Fellow of twenty-two. It was the duty of the Moderator to preside at the Disputations or Debates, to criticise the arguments offered, and to decide the question in debate. These disputations in Lincoln College were held daily, and were an important part of the college curriculum. Wesley, who was a logician from the cradle, evidently took great interest in them, and remembered them in later years with satisfaction. "I could not avoid," he says, "acquiring hereby some degree of expertness in arguing, and especially in discovering and pointing out, well-covered fallacies. I have since found abundant reason to praise God for giving me this honest art." But of even more service in all his later years were the liberal studies which he pursued with such fidelity during his residence in Oxford. Wesley was never, to be sure, a scholar in the modern, technical sense; he was not a man of profound attainments or of original research in any department of knowledge. But his outlook had been so broadened, and his temper so humanized by his early studies, that he was, all his life long, a man of scholarly tastes and habits, of genuine culture. His work was to be done mostly with the great English lower-middle class, who had little education or refinement; but he never showed in himself or countenanced in his followers any of that narrow distrust of secular learning and letters too often characteristic of religious reformers. His duties, when his career had begun, left him no leisure for the still air

of delightful studies; but no one would have enjoyed such leisure more. In fact, through all his days, in his constant and wearisome labors, performed with and for people of narrow horizon and meagre information, he found refreshment and inspiration in the world's masterpieces of literature.

But it is the development of his religious ideals and experience that renders Wesley's life in Lincoln College noteworthy. At Christ Church he had found his surroundings and companionships not helpful to his new-formed purpose to lead a life more strict and devout. His removal to Lincoln brought him into a society of entire strangers; he knew, he says, not a single person in the college. The Fellows of Lincoln were, he wrote to his brother Samuel, well natured and well bred; yet he determined here to shut himself completely away from such idle, though innocent, conversation as he had found annoying at Christ Church, and to admit to his companionship only those whose religious purposes and experience were congenial to his own. With doubtful courtesy and still more doubtful Christian wisdom, he quietly repelled the friendly advances of all those with whom he felt out of sympathy, and shut himself up from the general life of the college. As he himself puts it, "I resolved to have only such acquaintances as would help me on my way to heaven." When any of another sort called on him, he behaved as courteously as he could, "but to the question, 'When will you call on me?' I returned no answer. When they had come a few times and found I still declined returning their visits, I saw them no more." He seems at times to have felt that even this cloistered seclusion of his Fellowship was too much in the world, and was tempted to

accept the mastership of a school in Yorkshire recommended to him by its absolute isolation, "so pent up between two hills that it is scarce accessible on any side, so that you can expect little company from without, and within there is none at all." There was apparently no sour acerbity in Wesley's temper or manner; a letter from one of the Fellows, sent him during his stay in Epworth next year, speaks of his reputation for goodness and civility, and regrets the absence from college of so agreeable a companion. But the religious ideal of Wesley in these days was certainly too much that of the ascetic or recluse. This tendency was probably increased by the acquaintance which he formed, at about this time, with the writings of William Law. Law's well-known book, the "Serious Call," was published in 1728. Wesley probably read it sometime in that year. Its glowing fervor, that contrasts so strangely with the lukewarm, rationalizing religious writing of that age, intensified Wesley's religious aspirations; while its picture of the vanity of the worldly life of society, drawn with the ardor of the devotee and the skill of the accomplished satirist, must have strengthened his ascetic inclinations. Law was then living at Putney in the Gibbon family, as tutor to the father of the historian. Wesley in the summer of 1732 visited him there, and formed a personal friendship which continued for some eight or nine years. It is not true, as Warburton sneeringly affirmed, that "Law begot Methodism"; but it is certain that his works, especially the "Serious Call," greatly deepened Wesley's sense of the possibilities and obligations of the religious life. Some of Law's suggestions as to habits of personal work and devotion he at once adopted, and some of the regula-

tions he laid down for his Societies, ten years later, may be traced to hints in the same book. It may be questioned, however, whether the influence of Law did not emphasize unfortunately that tendency to an isolated and self-centred ideal of religious experience to which Wesley at this time was certainly too much inclined. It took him long to learn that this is not the true spirit of Christianity; that he who would follow the example and share the work of the Master must not be so exclusively bent on saving his own soul.

In August, 1727, Wesley left Oxford to take up residence in a place that one thinks might have satisfied any desire for retirement. His father had charge not only of the parish of Epworth but of the adjoining parish of Wroote, and, finding the care of both too onerous for his advancing years, urged his son to come to his assistance as Curate. Wesley consented, and for the next two and a quarter years spent most of his time at Wroote. This little village was five miles from Epworth, in a dreary, sodden country, surrounded by impassable bogs, and for most of the year accessible only by boat. Wesley himself was nearly drowned while making the passage to Epworth one day in the summer of 1728. The people in the parish — only about two hundred in number — were even more ignorant and lumpish than the average men of the fen country.

> "High birth and virtue equally they scorn,
> As asses dull, on dunghills born,"

wrote Wesley's sprightly sister Hetty, with rather more truth than charity. Of Wesley's life with them there is little recorded. He says himself that, though he preached much in those years, he saw little fruit of his

preaching, and thinks he made the mistake of "taking it for granted that all to whom I preached were believers and that many of them needed no repentance." If Hetty's estimate of the folk in Wroote was at all correct, this was a somewhat curious mistake; but the truth probably is that if Wesley did not adapt his sermons to his hearers, it was because in those years he was thinking more of his own needs than of theirs. On the whole, this, his only parochial experience, seems not to have been in any sense very successful; and it was doubtless with some satisfaction that he received a summons to return to Oxford. Dr. Morley, Master of Lincoln, wrote him it had been decided that Junior Fellows who had been chosen Moderators should attend to the duties of that office in person unless they could present substitutes; and as there was no substitute for Wesley at that time, it was necessary that he should resume his duties in the college or resign his fellowship. He took up his residence in Lincoln again in November, 1729, and remained there till the end of 1735.

Charles Wesley, who had prepared for the University at Westminster School, where his brother Samuel was Usher, was entered at Christ Church in 1726, just before John left that college for Lincoln. At first he was disinclined to give much thought to serious matters, and to John's expostulations replied that he must not be expected to turn saint all at once. But in his case, as in that of his brother John, the life of study and the approach to the duties and responsibilities of active years, probably sobered him to decision. His letters in the next two or three years prove that his life was thoughtful and religious. In the spring of 1729

he writes to John of a "modest, well-disposed youth" whom he has been able to rescue from bad company and lead to a higher life. This young man, Robert Morgan,[1] and one or two other friends of like earnest religious purpose associated themselves with Charles Wesley in the purpose to lead a more strict and ordered life. The friendship of these young men was so intimate and the performance of all their duties, secular as well as religious, so exact that they soon gained the reputation of singularity. A Christ Church undergraduate dubbed them "Methodists"; the happy nickname was caught up at once, and before the close of 1729 seems to have become their usual designation. Of the little group, John Wesley, when he returned to Oxford in the fall of 1729, became at once the recognized leader. They fell into the habit of meeting regularly, most often in his room in Lincoln College. At first their meetings were on Sunday evenings only, then two evenings in the week, and later every evening. Their association was not exclusively for religious purposes, for on week-day evenings they read the classics as well as the Greek Testament. But their religious sympathies were the real bond of fellowship. They discussed questions of duty, laid down a definite scheme of self-examination, assigning to every evening some special duty or virtue for discussion. There were at first but four of them, the two Wesleys, Morgan, and Robert Kirkham of Merton College, an old friend of Wesley's undergraduate days; but the

[1] I cannot find positive evidence as to this. Certainly Morgan was the closest friend of Charles Wesley in the following autumn. The "young man" cannot have been Kirkham, and there is no mention of any other member of the society at that time.

circle soon widened. Their number varied from time to time, once rising as high as twenty-nine; but when Wesley left Oxford in 1735 there were fourteen. The members afterwards to become best known were James Hervey, author of the most popular book of the mid-eighteenth century, the "Meditations among the Tombs," and the most eloquent of all preachers, George Whitefield; but one or two others probably exerted more influence upon Wesley at the time, especially John Clayton and Robert Morgan. It was Clayton from whom Wesley derived many of the High Church notions he entertained at that time; it was Morgan who introduced him to the work of practical benevolence.

One day in August, 1730, Morgan visited a condemned murderer lying in the Castle, or jail of Oxford, and at the same time chanced to speak with some of the prisoners confined there for debt. He saw at once that here was an opportunity for doing good that no one seemed to improve. At his urgent invitation John and Charles Wesley joined him in visits to the Castle, and soon planned to see the prisoners there regularly once or twice a week. Morgan next determined to visit the sick poor of the city, and urged the Wesleys to join him in this good office also. John Wesley seems to have had at first a fear that in these works of active benevolence he might be violating some proprieties or invading the province of other men, and he wrote to his father for advice in the matter. The reply he received left him in no doubt as to his father's approval. "As to your designs and employments," wrote the heroic old rector of Epworth, "what can I say less of them than *Valde probo*, and that I have the highest

reason to bless God he has given me two sons together in Oxford to whom he has given grace and courage to turn the war against the world and the devil. . . . Go on then in God's name, in the path to which your Saviour has directed you, and that track wherein your father has gone before you! For when I was an undergraduate at Oxford, I visited those in the Castle then, and I reflect on it with great satisfaction to this day." Mr. Morgan, who has broken the ice for them, he declares he must adopt as his son in Jesus Christ, "and when I have such a Ternion to prosecute that war wherein I am now *miles emeritus*, I shall not be ashamed when they speak with their enemies in the gate." By his father's advice, Wesley applied to the Chaplain of the prison and the Bishop of the diocese for approval of the benevolent work the Club had begun, and received from both hearty sanction and encouragement. Before the close of the summer of 1730, the young men had formed a plan for the systematic ministration to the prisoners in jail and the sick and poor of the city. They collected the poor children of the outlying villages into classes and taught them the Catechism. They deprived themselves of all but the barest necessities in order to save money to purchase food and medicine for the destitute, or to relieve worthy persons imprisoned for small debts. Wesley began then his lifelong practice of giving away all he could save. One year he had an income of thirty pounds; he lived on twenty-eight pounds and gave away the two. The next year he had an income of sixty pounds and gave away thirty-two; and the fourth year, still living on twenty-eight pounds, he could give away ninety-two.

In all this there was nothing that ought to have

brought upon these young men the derision of their fellows. They did not obtrude their rules of life upon others, or pose as better than their neighbors. At worst they could be accused of only a certain exclusiveness. Yet it is a singular testimony to the temper of the age that their piety provoked ridicule and their charity provoked suspicion. Significantly, their ministrations to the poor and the sick seem to have excited more active disapproval than their distinctively religious observances. Meetings were held among the members of the University to protest against this new enthusiasm. Attacks upon them were so frequent and persistent that, in the winter of 1730–1731, Wesley drew up a list of queries which they were accustomed to propose to their critics. The nature both of the attack and the defence may be gathered from some of the most representative of these queries: —

"Whether we may not try to do good to our acquaintances? Particularly whether we may not try to convince them of the necessity of being Christians, and of the consequent necessity of being scholars?

"Whether we may not try to do good to those that are hungry, naked, or sick? In particular whether, if we know of any necessitous family, we may not give them a little food, clothes, or physic, as they want?

"Whether we may not contribute what little we are able toward having the children clothed and taught to read?

"Whether we may not try to do good to those that are in prison?

"Whether we may not lend small sums to those that are of any trade that they may procure themselves tools and materials to work with?

"Whether we may not give them, if they can read, a Bible, Common Prayer Book, or 'Whole Duty of Man'?

"Whether we may not, as we have opportunity, explain and enforce these upon them, especially with respect to public and private prayer and the blessed sacrament?" [1]

It is readily to be believed, as Wesley says, that he could never find, even in that age which had not yet heard of prison reform, any person who would deliberately answer these queries in the negative. Some friend had sufficient confidence in the novel form of beneficence the young men were attempting, to give them small sums of money in aid of their work for the sick and the poor. But there seems no reason to think that the great body of University men ever regarded their activities as anything else than a temporary outbreak of unfortunate enthusiasm.

The ways of this little group of Methodists were doubtless in very striking contrast with those of other Oxford men. They did not, indeed, parade their benevolence; they did not court opposition; they could not be drawn into acrimonious rejoinder. But it was noticed that these young fellows who were teaching the felons in the Castle, carrying help to the slums of Oxford, and catechising the children in the outlying villages, themselves were living a life of cheerful abstemiousness, and of punctilious religious observance. They rose at five in the morning. They fasted twice in the week. They partook of the Holy Communion every Sunday. They repeated a Collect at nine, twelve, and three every day, and were understood to use brief

[1] Introductory Letter to the Journal.

silent prayers or ejaculations hourly. Wesley himself strove with anxious solicitude to ascertain the doctrines and usages of the Primitive Church. His belief and practices at this period were such as to-day would be called marks of a rather advanced High Churchmanship. It is evident from his letters that he was inclined to look with favor upon the celebration of the Eucharist upon the sabbath (*i.e.* on Sunday), and on all saints' days, on the mixed chalice, the confessional, and prayers for the dead. With his brother Charles he paid several visits to William Law, whose books had so influenced him some years before; and by Law's advice he began to study the works of the German mystics. His incessant labors and his rigid discipline probably injured his health; during the summer of 1734 his strength was much reduced and he suffered alarming hemorrhages of the lungs.

It was greatly significant of change that, in the complacent, self-indulgent, rationalizing, cold-hearted eighteenth century, a little group of Oxford men should have devised a new scheme of systematic philanthropy, and should have set themselves to revive the spirit and the observances of the Primitive Church. But yet it must be said that this was not the Methodism that within the next twoscore years was to spread all over England. It is true that, as Wesley said in 1765, all the essential doctrines of his later teaching were contained in a notable sermon he preached before the University in 1733. It is true, moreover, that all his life long he had a fondness for many churchly usages which he would no longer insist upon, and was always inclined to accept anything that could be proved to have the sanction of the Early Church. But the type

of religious life he was cultivating at Oxford was not really Evangelical. It was rather monastic. It was too self-centred. It is not very strange that the little group of Oxford Methodists did not make many converts among the men of the University. They were really not intent upon making converts; they were intent on saving their own souls. Even their works of benevolence and mercy they regarded, perhaps half unconsciously, chiefly as means of grace to themselves. This was especially true of Wesley. He practically separated himself from the life of the University, and shut his doors against the companionship of the great body of his fellow-students. "I resolved," says he, "to have only such acquaintances as could help me on my way to heaven." It took John Wesley long to learn that this is not the spirit of Christianity: that Jesus Christ would not have founded a Holy Club. He was certainly unjust to himself when he said, as he was used to say a few years later, that while in Oxford he was not a Christian at all; but he had yet to learn the full meaning of the truth that whosoever will save his life shall lose it. The Oxford Methodist, self-denying, devout, scrupulously observant of every outward religious requirement, certainly was a Christian, and of a noble sort; but he was not yet the preacher and reformer who could renew the religious life of a nation.

We are not to think of Wesley, however, in these years as a rigid recluse. There was no sour austerity in his nature. He was always keenly alive to the attractions of good society, and occasional references in the letters of his friends attest the interest of his conversation and the charm of his manners. There are indications enough, too, that he was by no means proof

against youthful sentiment. That susceptibility which was to be so marked in his later life had already shown itself. In the first year of his Lincoln Fellowship he formed an acquaintance with a Miss Betty Kirkham, for whom he soon came to feel something warmer than friendship. Miss Kirkham was the sister of his college friend, Robert Kirkham, and the daughter of a clergyman in Staunton, Northamptonshire. A letter from Robert Kirkham as early as February, 1727, makes it certain that Wesley was then on terms of intimacy with the family, and that any regard he may have had for Miss Betty was returned by the young lady herself, and warmly approved by her brother. "Often have you been in the thought of M.B.," (Miss Betty,) wrote young Kirkham, "which I have curiously observed by her inward smiles and sighs, and by her abrupt expressions concerning you. Shall this suffice? I caught her this morning in a humble and devout position on her knees. . . . I must conclude, and subscribe myself your most affectionate friend, *and brother, I wish I might write*, Robert Kirkham."

The acquaintance was evidently well known to the family at Epworth, for in a letter of a week later, Wesley's sister Martha, upbraiding him for delay in writing home, adds "When I knew that you had just returned from Worcestershire where I suppose you saw your *Varanese*, I then ceased to wonder at your silence, for the sight of a woman, 'so known, so loved,' might well make you forget me."

Wesley kept up a correspondence with Miss Kirkham for some four years, till in 1731 the acquaintance seems to have been broken off. Nobody now knows why. But conjecture is not difficult. Wesley may have hesitated at

marriage, when to marry meant to surrender his Fellowship and give up his Oxford work and residence; while Miss Betty, on her part, may naturally have been piqued at his hesitation, and tired of waiting for a marriage that seemed likely to be so remote. At all events, from a condoling phrase in a letter to Wesley from his sister Emily, it seems to have been Miss Betty who decided the matter. Indeed, some of the family correspondence would indicate that even before the close of her acquaintance with Wesley she had married a Mr. Wilson; she died in 1732.

The Kirkhams were a clever family with an ambition for intellectual society. Of their friends, at the time of Wesley's acquaintance, the most noteworthy was Mrs. Pendarves, afterwards Mrs. Delaney. This brilliant woman, "the highest-bred woman in the world," as Burke said of her in later years, a niece of Lord Lansdowne, was then at the beginning of a social career in which she formed the acquaintance of almost every great man of the century from Jonathan Swift to Samuel Johnson. Mr. Pendarves, to whom she had been married when she was a handsome girl of eighteen and he was a gouty, jealous old sloven of sixty, had died some four years earlier, and she was now an engaging young widow of twenty-nine, living in London but spending her summers mostly with her parents in Gloucestershire. When a young girl she had formed a friendship with Sally Kirkham — afterwards the Mrs. Chapone who carried on a long literary correspondence with the novelist Richardson, and mother-in-law of that later Mrs. Chapone who wrote the once famous "Letters on the Improvement of the Mind" — and this friendship she was now renewing. It was doubtless in the Kirkham

family, and sometime before 1731, that Wesley first met her. A long correspondence followed, in which, after the stilted fashion of the day, the lady signs herself "Aspasia," Wesley is "Cyrus," and Betty Kirkham is "Varanese." The letters, which have never been printed in full, are mostly concerned with religious matters, but are written in a style of elaborate courtesy which reminds us that we are in an age of formal sentiment. The occasion of writing, in the first place, seems to have been the mutual regard of both writers for Varanese. The correspondence, however, was certainly kept up some time after Miss Betty had denied to Wesley any hope of marriage; and in the opinion of some of his later biographers, Wesley was not unwilling that Aspasia should accept the affections Varanese had resigned. When Mrs. Pendarves left England in the autumn of 1732 for a long visit to friends in Ireland, she allowed the correspondence to lapse; partly, as she said, from negligence, and perhaps also partly because she deemed the friendship of her correspondent growing rather strained. Some three years later, she invited Wesley to write her again; but he declined to renew an intimacy he wisely judged of little profit to either party. It is difficult — and not very important — to determine the nature of his regard for Mrs. Pendarves during these years 1730 and 1731; there was always a marked vein of sentiment in his nature. But the episode, however explained, obviously proves that the earnestness of his life had not blinded him to the charms of society, especially when illustrated in an accomplished woman. The labored artificiality of some of his letters to Aspasia is proof not so much of insincerity as of a natural desire in this young ascetic

to show himself not inapt in the phrase of courtly sentiment.

These years which Wesley spent in residence as Fellow of Lincoln were probably in many respects the happiest of his life. Never again were his surroundings so congenial. Few of all the many lovers of Oxford have ever loved her more than he. The stately beauty of the mediæval town grew into his heart. When in his eightieth year, after describing with enthusiasm some Dutch towns he had lately visited, he adds, "After all, they have nothing to compare with St. John's or Trinity Gardens, much less with Magdalen river walk or Christ Church Meadows." By natural preference always a scholar and a recluse, he found here in Oxford the reverend traditions of piety and learning, the grave and cloistered life, what a later Oxford lover has called "the last enchantments of the middle age," that to a temper like Wesley's are so fascinating. His life as Fellow was ideal. He had the companionship of a few friends congenial in tastes and in religious purpose, and his natural sense of leadership was perhaps unconsciously flattered by their recognition of him as guide and adviser. The criticisms upon him and his friends seemed to him only that opposition which all who would live godly in the present evil world must expect to encounter, and a salutary stimulus to fidelity. His life was divided between quiet study by himself and active ministrations to others, as he would have liked to have it divided all his days. Forty years after, when opposition to his work had mostly ceased and his preachers were settled all over the island, he wrote to his brother Charles, "I often cry out, *Vitæ me redde priori;* let me be again an Oxford Methodist."

His love for Oxford and for his life there was soon to be proved in a striking manner. In 1724 the aged rector of Epworth, feeling that he had not long to live, wrote to John entreating him to accept the living of Epworth and continue the good work of his father there. If John should not accept it, the living seemed likely to fall to a fox-hunting parson of the worst variety, and "the prospect of that mighty Nimrod's coming hither," wrote his father, "shocks my soul, and is in a fair way to bring down my gray hairs in sorrow to the grave." The other members of the Epworth household joined in the request, and his brother Samuel wrote him warmly urging that he accede to their wishes. But this John Wesley could not bring himself to do. He wrote a portentously long letter to his father, in which, after his methodical fashion, he draws out laboriously twenty-six different reasons why he should stay where he was. Twenty-five of them were essentially selfish reasons. In Oxford, he says, he can have congenial religious companions and only those; he can have retirement, he is without annoyance from worldly persons and lukewarm Christians; he is absolutely free from the "cares of the world"; he has the constant enjoyment of the offices of the church — in a word, he "can be holier in Oxford than anywhere else." Moreover, in the world outside he feels that he could not for a moment withstand the temptations to irregularity, intemperance, and self-indulgence. It is such a response as a monk of the twelfth century might have made to solicitations from without the cloister. And the old father, though he professed himself a little puzzled by his son's sophisms, answered them all with his usual blunt common-sense: —

"Your state of the question and only argument is: The question is not whether I could do more good to others, there or here; but whether I could do more good to myself; seeing wherever I can be most holy myself, there I can most promote holiness in others. But I can improve myself more at Oxford than at any other place.

"To this I answer, first, it is not dear self, but the glory of God, and the different degrees of promoting it, which should be our main consideration and direction in the choice of any course of life.

"Second. Supposing you could be more holy yourself at Oxford, how does it follow that you could more promote holiness in others there than elsewhere? Have you found many instances of it, after so many years' hard pain and labor?

"Third. I cannot allow austerity, or fasting, considered by themselves, to be proper acts of holiness, nor am I for a solitary life. God made us for a social life; we are not to bury our talent; we are to let our light shine before men, and that not merely through the chinks of a bushel for fear the wind should blow it out." [1]

Wesley had no satisfactory answer to this; but he still declined to give up his work at Oxford. It was only next year, a few weeks before his father's death, that he seems to have given a reluctant consent; but it was then too late. His father died in April of 1735, and the living went to the "Mighty Nimrod," who seems never to have resided in the parish. It was doubtless fortunate, say rather providential, that Wesley did not exchange Oxford for Epworth; but one

[1] "Letters by the Rev. John Wesley and his Friends." By Joseph Priestley, Birmingham, 1791.

cannot admit that his reasons for refusing to do so were of a very noble sort. Next year, on the very same reasons, he decided to leave Oxford for a very different field, in which his success was hardly greater than he might have expected in Epworth.

In the summer of 1735, General James Oglethorpe was in London soliciting aid for his new colony of Georgia. Oglethorpe, who was a genuine philanthropist, as well as a gentleman and something of a statesman, had been scandalized by the horrid condition of English prisons, and especially by the hardships attending and following imprisonment for debt. He conceived the idea of a colony in the interest primarily of those unfortunate men who had been confined in debtors' jails, a colony which should afford such persons an opportunity for independence and a new trial of the fortunes of life. He proposed also that his colony should be an asylum for persecuted Protestants from any part of Europe, and should be a centre of missionary effort among the Indians. His scheme met with favor from the new Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts, — the first English missionary Society, — and he succeeded in securing a handsome endowment for his colony and a grant of land from the Crown. He had planted the colony successfully in 1732, and now returned to England to invite other colonists and further aid. He brought with him a friendly Indian Chief and his train, who were the sensation of London that summer, and stimulated in the imagination of an overartificial society those vague notions of the noble primitive life which Rousseau was soon to formulate and spread over Europe.

Oglethorpe wished to find some young Englishman in orders who would serve at once as Chaplain to the English community at Savannah and missionary to the Indians. Dr. Burton of Corpus Christi College, who was well acquainted with the Oxford Methodists, recommended John Wesley, and on one of Wesley's visits to London introduced him to Oglethorpe. With the Wesley family Oglethorpe was already acquainted. The rector of Epworth, who had always dreams of far missionary effort, had been heartily interested in the Georgia Colony, and not long before his death wrote Oglethorpe that if he were but ten years younger, he would assuredly go himself; and John's elder brother Samuel had given a set of Communion plate to the church in Savannah. It was natural, therefore, that Oglethorpe should consider favorably the nomination of Wesley, and urge him to accept this position. Wesley at first declined, partly because he was still loth to leave Oxford, and partly because he felt he ought not to put the Atlantic between himself and his widowed mother. But as the invitation was urgent, he consulted with his brother Samuel, with Law, whom he still regarded as his spiritual adviser, with the closest of his Oxford Methodist friends, Clayton, and then went down to Epworth to lay the case before his mother. She had no hesitation; "If I had twenty sons," said the brave old lady, "I should rejoice that they were all so employed, though I never saw them more." So assured, Wesley decided to go. He was to be missionary to the Indians from the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, with a salary of fifty pounds. He persuaded Benjamin Ingham, one of the Oxford group, to accompany him, and Charles Delamotte, another of

Wesley's friends, insisted, against the wishes of his parents, that he be allowed to join the party. And at the last moment, Charles Wesley, who had just taken orders, decided to go too, as Secretary of Oglethorpe. It is significant to notice that Wesley's reasons for going to Georgia were essentially the same as the reasons he had alleged a year before for staying in Oxford. In a letter written four days before he sailed, he says explicitly, "My chief motive is the hope of saving my own soul. . . . I cannot hope to attain the same degree of holiness here which I may there." In the wilds of America, removed from the pomp and show of the world, with little opportunity for foolish and hurtful desires, he will be free, he thinks, from most of the temptations that daily beset him in Oxford. Very curious it is to see this combination of religious asceticism with that eighteenth-century tendency to idealize the primitive life. As for the Indians, Wesley shared to the full the fictitious notion of the noble savage then so current. He hoped to learn the purity of the Christian faith by observing its effects upon the untutored mind of the red man, much as our students of social science take up residence in the slums not so much from benevolent as from scientific motives. He says in the letter just quoted, "They have no comments to construe away the text [of the gospel]; no vain philosophy to corrupt it; no luxurious, sensual, covetous, ambitious expounders to soften its unpleasing truths. They have no party, no interest to serve, and are therefore fit to receive the Gospel in its simplicity. They are as little children, humble, willing to learn, and eager to do, the Will of God." Wesley saw reason to change his estimate of Indian character in the next two years.

It was on the voyage to Georgia that Wesley first met a type of religious experience that was to have great influence upon his own. On the ship was a company of twenty-six Moravians going out with their bishop, David Nitschmann, to join a number of their own faith who had already settled in Georgia. Wesley, who had laid down for himself and his three companions a rigid routine of daily study and devotion, found himself strongly attracted by the demeanor of these simple German Christians. They were ready to perform the most humble offices without pay or even thanks; they were always cheerful, and no neglect could rouse them to protest, no insult provoke them to anger. He joined them in their public devotions, and set himself to learn German that he might converse with them more freely. As the slow weeks of the three months' voyage wore on, Wesley saw in them a deep and quiet faith, an undisturbed serenity of spirit such as he coveted but could not attain. When, at the close of a day's storm, an immense wave broke over the ship just as they were at their evening song, and the English passengers were screaming with terror at the prospect of immediate shipwreck, the Moravians continued their singing as calmly as if they had been in the chapel at Herrnhut. "Were you not afraid?" asked Wesley of one of them next day. "I thank God, no," was the reply. "But were not your women and children afraid?" "No," he answered mildly, "our women and children are not afraid to die." Immediately on landing, Wesley sought out the Moravian pastor of Savannah, Spangenberg, to ask advice as to the work he was to undertake. To his surprise, Spangenberg said: "My brother, I must first ask *you* one or two questions.

Have you the witness within yourself? Does the Spirit of God bear witness with your spirit that you are a child of God?" and added, as Wesley hesitated, "Do you know Jesus Christ?" Unaccustomed to being catechised after this fashion, Wesley could only say, "I know he is the Saviour of the world." "Friend," replied Spangenberg, "but do you know he has saved you?" and when Wesley replied, "I hope he died to save me," pushed the further question, "Do you know, yourself?" "I do," answered Wesley; but he adds, in his account of the interview, "I fear they were vain words." Wesley and Delamotte, while a house was being prepared for them, took lodging for a few days with the Moravians, and were convinced that their life was in manner and in spirit closely similar to that of the first Christians. At the election and consecration of a new bishop, the ceremony was so simple and at the same time so solemn, in such striking contrast with the pomp of the English ceremonial, that Wesley was ready to "forget the 1700 years between and imagine myself in one of those assemblies where form and state were not, but Paul the tent-maker or Peter the fisherman presided; yet with the demonstration of the Spirit and of power."

The example and teaching of the Moravians unquestionably convinced Wesley of the possibility of an assured personal religious experience to which he was as yet a stranger. It deepened his dissatisfaction with himself, and increased the austerity of his life. But the simplicity of the Moravian forms did not lead him to lay any less emphasis upon churchly observance. Rather the contrary. During his stay in Georgia Wesley was an extreme High Churchman, with a longing after Moravian quietism and assurance.

In the first object of his visit he had little success; his plans for work among the Indians came to nothing. Oglethorpe, who had probably no very sentimental view of the Indian character, told him it would be hardly safe to venture much outside the settlements, and insisted that his first duty was to the English colonists. And Wesley himself must have been disappointed in his notion that the Indians were waiting "like little children to receive and obey the Gospel." After two years' acquaintance, he gives them a quite different character. "They are all," he writes in his Journal, "except perhaps the Choctaws, gluttons, thieves, dissemblers, liars. They are implacable, murderers of fathers, murderers of mothers, murderers of their own children." The chiefs whom he interviewed on his arrival told him in plain terms that at present they had too much fighting on their hands to attend to anything else; if ever they finished that successfully, they might perhaps listen to him. Of course they never did finish it. Just before his return to England, Wesley writes with delightful naïveté, that he has not taught the Indians because he has "not found or heard of any Indian on the Continent of America who had the least desire of being instructed." And yet this is the man who, in the next ten years, is to deliver his message fearlessly to thousands who received it with howls of anger or derision.

Nor were the results of his labor as pastor to the colonists altogether satisfactory. He gave himself to that work, when he found he could do nothing for the Indians, with characteristic zeal. His life was never more austere, his observance of every churchly duty never more punctilious. He administered the Communion

every Sunday and holy day. He held services on Sunday at five, and eleven, and three, besides which he read prayers in Italian at nine, in French at one, and catechised the children at two. He learned Spanish that he might preach to some Spanish Jews he found in his parish. He induced a number of serious persons to form a little society which should meet once or twice a week for religious conversation, and selected a still smaller number for a more intimate union like that of the Oxford Methodists. He gathered the children into a school which Delamotte taught, and when some of the more well-to-do children noticed the mean clothing of their fellows, Wesley took Delamotte's place as teacher for a week and went to the school barefoot every day to shame their pride. He visited all his parishioners in person, usually choosing the heated hour of noon for that duty because he was then most sure to find them in their houses. He fasted thrice a week, and lived habitually on bread and fruit. He was apparently insensible to hardship and bore tropical heat and tropical rain without complaint.

Such self-denying labors could not fail of effect. It is exaggeration to say that Wesley's mission in Georgia was a failure. He made sincere friends and did much good. When Whitefield visited the colony in 1738, he wrote: "Mr. Wesley's name is very precious among the people here. He has laid a foundation that neither men nor angels will ever be able to shake." But yet it is clear that, while Wesley commanded the respect of many and the love of some, he did not gain any real following. He could not awaken any deep or general religious interest among the colonists. He gave no promise of great religious leadership; the marvel-

lous results that were to follow his preaching, before the middle of the century, all over England, could never have been predicted from his work in Georgia. He was personally unpopular, and that not altogether among the baser sort. The dislike for him was especially marked in the little settlement of Frederica, some hundred miles south of Savannah. Charles Wesley had gone there shortly after his arrival in Georgia; but, vexed by the quarrelsome temper of the people and discouraged by an unfortunate difference with Oglethorpe, he had thrown up his position and sailed back to England after only six months' stay in the Colony. Wesley visited Frederica two or three times, after the departure of Charles, with the hope to continue the work his brother had tried to start. But he met with nothing but opposition, and excited so much enmity that his life was more than once threatened. At length he, too, gave up Frederica in utter despair of doing any good there, and content, he says, never to see it more. In Savannah, while there was no such violent personal antagonism as in Frederica, his influence was not increasing during the later months of his stay.

For this comparative failure, it is not difficult to perceive some reasons. Wesley's parishioners were a difficult folk. Recruited largely from the more shiftless and disorderly classes in England, they were restive under any attempted discipline, and did not always accept with a good grace the authoritative rebukes of their young pastor. Moreover, to such a community the priestly and ascetic type of religion which Wesley enjoined and practised must have been specially repugnant. Too careless of all proprieties, struggling with hard conditions in a raw, half-savage country, they

naturally viewed with impatience the attempt to impose any elaborate ceremonial upon the crude and meagre circumstance of their life. They were repelled by Wesley's austerities, and irritated by his insistence upon the requirements of a rigid sacerdotalism. They learned with surprise and indignation that this Oxford priest had refused to baptize an infant by sprinkling rather than by pouring; had refused the Lord's Supper to several persons because they had not given previous formal notice of their intention to communicate; that he was endeavoring to enforce confession and penance, and refusing the sacraments and burial to dissenters. "We are Protestants," said one of his hearers in Frederica, "but as for you, we cannot tell what religion you are of. We never heard of such a religion before; we know not what to make of it." And perhaps the deepest reason for Wesley's lack of hold upon the community is to be found in the fact of his own spiritual restlessness during those years in Georgia. His almost feverish activity, his anxious performance of all outward duties, his extreme personal ascetism, all may indicate that the religion he was urging upon others had not yet brought entire satisfaction to himself.

His decision to leave the Colony was precipitated by a petty quarrel which can bring no reproach upon his name, but which certainly exhibits some weaker sides of his character. Shortly after landing in Savannah, at the suggestion of Oglethorpe, he had been introduced to a Miss Sophia Hopkey, niece of Mr. Causton, the Magistrate of the Colony. It is quite clear that Miss Hopkey, who was a sprightly and intelligent girl of attractive person and manners, was very willing to foster the acquaintance. She attended Mr. Wesley's

services with regularity; she chose her gowns to suit his quiet taste; and she took the proverbially effective measure of caring for him through a week's illness. Thus encouraged, it was inevitable that one of Wesley's susceptible temperament should find his friendship growing into intimacy; it is certain that he gave Miss Hopkey reason to expect that he intended marriage. At this point, his friend Delamotte, perhaps displeased at the part the lady took in her own wooing, perhaps dreading to lose the first place in Wesley's regard, ventured to caution his friend and advise him to take counsel with the Moravian Elders. Wesley weakly assented; and instead of deciding the important question himself, promised to lay it before the Moravians and abide by their decision. The decision was adverse; and Wesley replied, "The will of the Lord be done." Miss Hopkey naturally resented this interference of Delamotte and the Moravian Elders. Not choosing to learn from Mr. Wesley his resolve to desert her, she promptly accepted the addresses of another suitor, a Mr. Williamson, and, after an engagement of five days, married him. Here the matter should have ended. Wesley may be pardoned a little personal feeling in his estimate of Mr. Williamson, as "not remarkable for handsomeness, neither for greatness, neither for wit, or knowledge, or sense, and least of all for religion." But he should not have made the mistake of visiting ecclesiastical discipline upon Mrs. Williamson, when he might have known his action would be misinterpreted. Forgetting that the lady could hardly be expected to welcome the admonitions of a priest who had just proved false as a lover, he ventured a reproof to Mrs. Williamson for some misconduct. She proved impeni-

tent, and he felt compelled to exclude her from the Communion. Her husband and uncle, indignant at what they chose to consider an act of personal spite, now brought suit against Wesley for defamation of character. They really had no case, and very likely knew they had not, for Wesley's action had been well within his rights as pastor; but they managed to draw out the legal proceedings over four months, to unite all the elements opposed to Wesley, and to create endless annoyance and scandal. Wesley felt that his usefulness in Georgia was over, and, taking the advice of his friends, decided to return to England. He sailed from Charleston on the 22d of December, 1737, and landed at Deal on the first day of the next February. Whitefield had sailed the day before for a brief visit of four months to the Colony Wesley had just left.

CHAPTER III

THE YEAR OF TRANSITION

1738–1739

Wesley returned from Georgia in a mood of discouragement. The tedious six weeks' voyage home was a period of profound depression. The hopes with which he had gone out two years before had all been disappointed. His mission to the Indians had failed entirely. His influence as a teacher and preacher among the colonists had declined. His austerities had repelled them; his fidelity to what he thought his priestly duty had been accounted arrogance or hypocrisy. He was doubtless conscious of some errors of practical judgment. He had sometimes unwisely imposed his opinions upon others; he had sometimes weakly intrusted to others decisions which he should have made himself. He had sacrificed to a mistaken sense of duty a very genuine affection, and then had found his action the occasion of a long series of petty persecutions and scandals. The memory of his stay in Georgia could hardly have been reassuring for future work.

But the keenest cause of disappointment Wesley found in his own spiritual condition. By his own confession, two years and a half before, he had gone to Georgia to "save his own soul"; and his own soul was not saved. The entries in the Journal during the last

days of the voyage give a clear statement of the nature of the poignant dissatisfaction with himself. Such passages as the following are significant as giving the clew to some most important phases of his experience during the next six months.

"*Tuesday, Jan.* 24. I went to America to convert the Indians; but O who shall convert me? Who, what, is he that will deliver me from this evil heart of unbelief? I have a fair summer religion. I can talk well; nay, and believe myself while no danger is near; but let death look me in the face and my spirit is troubled. . . . I *now* believe the Gospel is true. I 'show my faith by my works,' by staking my all upon it. I would do so again and again a thousand times, if the choice were still to make. Whoever sees me sees I would be a Christian. But in a storm I think, 'What if the Gospel be not true!'"

Five days later he declares, "I who went to America to convert others was never myself converted," and brands himself a "child of wrath," and "heir of hell." "If it be said that I have faith (for many such things I have heard from many miserable comforters), I answer, so have the devils, — a sort of faith; but still they are strangers to the covenant of promise. So the apostles had even at Cana in Galilee, when Jesus first 'manifested forth his glory'; even then they, in a sort, 'believed in him'; but they had not then 'the faith that overcometh the world.' The faith I want is 'A sure trust and confidence in God, that through the merits of Christ, my sins are forgiven, and I reconciled to the favor of God.' . . . I want that faith which none can have without knowing that he hath it."

In expressions of such extreme self-depreciation Wesley, of course, did himself great injustice. He, himself, afterward modified or retracted them, and protested that words wrung from him "in anguish of my heart" ought not to be taken as deliberate estimates of a permanent spiritual condition. John Wesley in Georgia was certainly a Christian, if any man ever was. Yet such passages may serve to show how intense was his desire after an inner experience different from any he had yet attained, a "faith which none can have without knowing that he hath it." Thirteen years before, in his letters to his mother, he had questioned the statement in Jeremy Taylor's "Holy Living" — which he was then reading — that "Whether God hath forgiven us or no, we know not"; and insisted that such a knowledge of pardon all those must have who believe the Scriptures and are conscious of their own sincerity. But he always craved something more than this "reasonable persuasion," and of late years the craving had grown more intense. There was something of the mystic in him, as in all strongly religious natures, though checked in his case by the practical bent of his disposition. For the last three years, at the suggestion of Law, he had been reading the writings of the German mystics, and coveted their temper of security and contemplation. Indeed, he wrote to his brother Samuel from Georgia, "I think the rock on which I had the nearest made shipwreck of the faith was the writings of the Mystics." But of all the influences tending to increase Wesley's dissatisfaction with himself the most potent was the example of the Moravians whose acquaintance he had made during his Georgia mission. He had been trying to observe the usages of the early

Christian Church; these men reproduced its spirit. Their quiet in danger and patience in trial, their steadiness of religious feeling, rebuked his restless longings. It was an emotional experience he craved, a calmness and elevation of feeling rather than any mere intellectual conviction. And after all his labors, he seemed no nearer attaining it than when he left Oxford.

To trace with accuracy the inner experience of Wesley during the next three months is needless, if it were possible. Nor need we be careful to fix any point of crisis which deserves to be called his "conversion"; but it is of interest to perceive what was the object of his desire, and how he attained it. For the experiences through which he passed in the first six months of that year 1738 unquestionably determined his future. The moody, discouraged John Wesley, who landed at Deal in January of that year was a very different man from John Wesley the confident evangelist of a year later.

Wesley reached London on the third of February. Four days later he met the man to whom he always ascribed his emergence from doubt and despondency. Peter Böhler was a young Moravian graduate of Jena, who had just been sent by Zinzendorf as a missionary to the Carolinas, and on his way thither was stopping to pay a visit to his Moravian brethren in England. Wesley, glad to meet another member of that church for which he had so high an esteem, welcomed him most cordially, and found lodgings for him with some of his own friends in London. Shortly afterward the two went down to Oxford together; and for the remaining weeks of Böhler's stay in England Wesley lost no opportunity of conference with him. Though ten years

younger than Wesley, Böhler assumed at once, and perhaps justly, the position of religious superior, and Wesley listened to his teachings with the eager humility of a disciple. What Böhler had to teach will doubtless seem to most readers of the Journal only the familiar and central doctrine of justification by faith — a faith which is not an assent of the intellect merely but an experience, a confident personal reliance upon the divine Goodness. Such a faith must inevitably bring to its possessor a sense of safety and assurance; if you have not the assurance, you have not the faith — indeed, the assurance, Böhler taught, *is* the faith. This assurance is not to be gained by obedience and good works, needful as these are; it is the gift of God. Moreover, Böhler urged, this assurance of faith is given instantaneously; it is not a growth, it is a bestowment. This teaching, Wesley, characteristically, did not accept without question. "Brother," said Böhler to him in Oxford, "this philosophy of yours must be purged away;" and in writing to Zinzendorf of Wesley's case he said, "Our mode of believing in the Saviour is so easy to Englishmen that they cannot reconcile themselves to it; if it were a little more artful, they would much sooner find their way into it." And even after he admitted that Böhler's teaching as to the nature and effect of faith was supported by Scripture and attested by the experience of witnesses whom Böhler brought to him, yet Wesley would not claim such experience for himself. Contrary to what is sometimes supposed, there was not the first element of fanaticism in Wesley's nature. His temperament was, rather, cool and logical; he never thought himself to find emotions in consciousness which were not there, or read off his convictions

in terms of feeling. If such emotional experiences as Böhler described were of the essence of faith, then he avowed he had no faith; and he concluded therefore that he ought not to preach. But just here Böhler gave him counsel worth all the rest of his teaching: "Preach faith," he said, "till you have it, and then because you have it, you will preach faith." This was, in effect, to subordinate mere personal experience to the great duty of preaching the Gospel; and was wiser advice than Böhler himself knew.

How well Wesley followed this advice in the next three months any reader of the Journal may see. He spoke from a pulpit whenever a pulpit was offered him; but this was only a small part of his preaching in those weeks. He had not, indeed, yet come to think formal worship proper anywhere but in a church; but he could teach anywhere. He went back to London; he went to Manchester to see his old Oxford friend Clayton; he went to Salisbury to see his mother, and to Tiverton to see his brother Samuel; he was called back to Oxford by the illness of his brother Charles — and on all these journeys, wherever he stopped, in the inns for dinner or at night, with fellow-travellers on foot or horseback, with people whom he met by the roadside, he lost no opportunity of warning, exhorting, directing men wherever he found them. It is not difficult to see in the brief records of these months the growth of a genuinely evangelical temper. Wesley is a missionary as never before. He no longer thinks of his efforts for others as a means to his own holiness. The man is forgetting himself in his work. Hitherto the most strict of ritualists, we find him saying that he cannot any longer confine himself

to the public forms of prayer, "neither do I purpose to use them any more, but to pray indifferently with form or without as I may find suitable to particular occasions." And if he still thinks himself to be waiting for some experience not yet attained, he frequently has that best experience of being carried out of all regard for himself in a rapture of love for God and his fellow-men.

"*May* 9. I preached at Great St. Helen's to a very numerous congregation, on 'He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him freely give us all things.' My heart was so enlarged to declare the love of God to all that were oppressed by the devil, that I did not wonder in the least, when I was afterward told, 'Sir, you must preach here no more.'"

This is not the language of the Oxford Methodist, the ascetic ritualist bent on saving his own soul. This is the voice of John Wesley, the evangelist and reformer.

Yet it was not until nearly a fortnight after this date, on the 24th of May, that he believed himself to have attained the faith for which he was waiting. The passage in the Journal is a *locus classicus* in the annals of Methodism: —

"In the evening I went very unwillingly to a society in Aldersgate Street where one was reading Luther's preface to the Epistle to the Romans. About a quarter before nine, while he was describing the change which God works in the heart through faith in Christ, I felt my heart strangely warmed. I felt I did trust in Christ, Christ alone for my salvation; and an assurance was given me that he had taken away my sins, even mine, and saved me from the law of sin and death."

It is not likely that any one to-day, whatever may be his theory as to the cause of such an experience as this, will pronounce it merely enthusiastic, or valueless for the uses of after life. To do so would be to forget the decisive moments in the lives of Augustine, Luther, and hosts of other religious leaders. The most recent psychology, on the contrary, pronounces these sudden transitions from a lower to a higher, a perturbed to a restful spiritual state, however caused, to be no proof of morbid or abnormal psychical conditions, but rather, in countless instances, to mark the ingress of new truth and new motives otherwise inaccessible.[1] Yet any one who reads Wesley's Journal for the year 1738 must perceive that the most essential proof of his spiritual development, through this period of transition, is not any such temporary exaltation and repose of feeling, memorable though that was in all his life, but rather the growth of the deep persuasion at once of the divine goodness and of human need, which has been the inspiration of great religious reformers in every age. It was much to have gained that composure of spirit he had so long desired;

[1] "Some of you, I feel sure, knowing that numerous backslidings and relapses take place, make of these their apperceiving mass for interpreting the whole subject [of conversion], and dismiss it with a pitying smile as so much 'hysterics.' Psychologically, as well as religiously, however, this is shallow. It misses the point of serious interest, which is not so much the duration as the nature and quality of these shiftings of character to higher levels. Men lapse from every level — we need no statistics to tell us that. Love is, for instance, well known not to be irrevocable, yet, constant or inconstant, it reveals new flights and reaches of ideality while it lasts. . . . So with this conversion experience: that it should, even for a short time, show a human being what is the high-water mark of his spiritual capacity, — this is what constitutes its importance. And, as a matter of fact, all the most striking instances of conversion . . . have been permanent." William James, "The Varieties of Religious Experience," p. 257.

it was more to have forgotten even the desire in unselfish love for others.

It was but natural that Wesley himself should at first overemphasize the importance of his experience. He fell into the serious error of pronouncing such emotional states to be the only and necessary tests of Christian character. In an informal religious gathering at the house of his old friend Mr. Hutton, he astonished the company by rising to his feet and declaring that up to Wednesday of the previous week he had never been a Christian. "Well, then," was the just reply of Mrs. Hutton, "you have been a great hypocrite." Samuel Wesley, always the coolest and most judicious of the three brothers, urged with much truth that such extravagant statements were likely to mislead and discourage many earnest people. In fact, as may be seen from the Journal in the following months, they sometimes discouraged Wesley himself, leading him to mistake a temporary dulness of feeling for proof of a lapse in faith. We find him writing, under date of January 4, 1739, in a mood of depression apparently quite as deep as that during the voyage from Georgia a year before: "My friends affirm I am mad because I said I was not a Christian a year ago. I affirm I am not a Christian now. Indeed, what I might have been I know not, had I been faithful to the grace then given, when expecting nothing less, I received such a sense of the forgiveness of my sins as till then I never knew. But that I am not a Christian at this day, I as assuredly know as that Jesus is the Christ. For a Christian is one who has the fruits of the Spirit of Christ, which (to mention no more) are love, peace, joy. But these I have not. I have not any love of God. I do not love either the

Father or the Son. Do you ask how do I know whether I love God? I answer by another question, 'How do you know whether you love me?' Why, as you know whether you are hot or cold. You *feel* at this moment that you do or do not love me. And I feel this moment, I do not love God; which therefore I *know*, because I feel it. . . . Though I have used all the means of grace for twenty years, I am not a Christian." [1]

But Wesley soon learned not to interpret too seriously these vacillations of feeling. Even during that year 1738, in his more carefully considered public utterances he seldom ventured to pronounce mere temporary emotions a test of love or faith. In a memorable sermon on Faith, preached in St. Mary's, Oxford, only three weeks after the 24th of May, he guards his statement of the assurance that accompanies faith, by the admission that it is given "perhaps not at all times, nor with the same fulness of persuasion." In his old age he wrote, "When, fifty years ago, my brother Charles and I, in the simplicity of our hearts, taught the people that unless they knew their sins forgiven, they were under the wrath and curse of God, I wonder that they did not stone us. The Methodists know better now."

It is true that the Wesleys did teach, all their days, that, in a very real sense, men might know their sins forgiven. They preached a religion that could not only be professed and believed but *experienced*. Therein is the secret of the success of the whole Methodist movement. That confidence speaks bold in Methodist ser-

[1] In the Journal this passage is prefaced by the statement, "One who had the form of godliness many years wrote the following reflections;" but there can be no doubt that Wesley was expressing his own mood at this time.

mons and rings glad in Methodist song. It was the one most unfortunate result of the Moravian influence that Wesley for a time tended to confuse this assurance with the evidence of fluctuating personal feeling. But it was only for a little time. After 1739 we never find in his Journal such passages as that just now quoted. Many readers of the Journal have probably been surprised to notice that, during the last fifty years of his life, there is hardly a reference to his own emotions. He tells you a good deal about the experiences of others; for himself, he tells you where he went, to whom he preached, what he saw, what he did, what he read; he very seldom tells you how he felt. He certainly was not one of those Christians who always live with an anxious finger on their spiritual pulse. His faith is a healthy, settled confidence, undisturbed by shifting moods.

Meantime, in the summer of 1738, Wesley, feeling deeply his indebtedness to the Moravians, determined to see them in their own community. He left London early in June, and journeyed by way of Amsterdam, Cologne, and the Rhine to Marienborn, about thirty-five miles from Frankfort. Here Count Zinzendorf was living as the head of a company of about ninety persons, most of whom were in training for work as missionaries. Wesley stayed here a fortnight, eagerly studying their discipline, and hearing an extended sermon from Zinzendorf, in which the teaching seems to have been somewhat at variance with what he had learned from Böhler. If tradition speaks truly, the Count treated the young English seeker after truth in somewhat lofty fashion. It is said that he one day set Wesley to dig in his garden, and after an hour's heated

work suddenly summoned him to enter a carriage and visit a nobleman in the vicinity. When Wesley asked a little time to bathe and change his clothing, the Count replied, "You must be simple, my brother!" Wesley, at all events, certainly has little to say of Zinzendorf in his Journal; one gets the impression that he did not find the great man altogether congenial. From Marienborn, Wesley went on to the principal Moravian settlement at Herrnhut. In this remote and peaceful village, on the edge of Bohemia, lying among cornfields and gardens and shut in by a girdle of wooded hills, Wesley passed a delightful fortnight. The community, clean, industrious, methodical, devout, showed all the virtues of the monastic life without any of its unnatural austerities. The brethren had a house set apart for strangers, and here Wesley was entertained. He attended the daily evening service of noble music, Scripture, and prayer, the daily conference at eleven in the morning for the exposition of a passage of Scripture in the original, and the conferences for strangers at which questions of doctrine were discussed. And, best of all, in long private conversations with members of the community, he heard and wrote down in his Journal the stories which these plain folk, one after another, gave him of their own experiences. He records no less than eight such narratives. Most of all, he found profit in the counsels of that remarkable man, the planter of the Herrnhut settlement and first Protestant missionary to Greenland, — Christian David. Wesley held long conversations with him, and heard him preach four sermons, one of which is recorded in the Journal.

In such a place and with such men Wesley declared he could gladly have spent the rest of his life. It was

with genuine reluctance that he turned his face again toward his work at home. He left Herrnhut on the 14th of August and reached London a month later. On the whole, his visit, while it strengthened the Moravian influence upon him, had broadened as well as deepened his conception of the religious life. He had gained abundant testimony to the reality of that personal experience in which he was now supremely interested; but he had learned also that this experience, always the same in its essentials, takes different forms in different persons. He had seen the teaching of Böhler supplemented, if not contradicted, by the lives of some of Böhler's Moravian brethren. He was, therefore, a little more careful about extreme statements himself, and more doubtful about the wisdom of making any definite phase of emotional experience the test of Christian character. He had seen, moreover, some tendencies among the Moravians that he did not altogether approve. In a letter written to them five days after his return to London, after dwelling upon their piety and virtues, he propounds the following questions: —

"Is not the Count all in all among you?

"Do you not magnify your own Church too much?

"Do you not use guile and dissimulation in many cases?

"Are you not of a close, dark, reserved temper and behavior?"

The letter, to be sure, was never sent; but it indicates what was in Wesley's mind at the moment. It is easy to understand the reference to the arrogance of Zinzendorf. Wesley never formed a very favorable estimate of him; but the charges in the last two queries

are surprising. They were probably unjust; but they suggest that Wesley perceived in his Moravian brethren some traces of that spiritual exclusiveness and pretension which ultimately produced his rupture with them.

The work of Wesley during the remaining months of 1738 and the first months of 1739 was mostly that of the religious adviser and confessor. He preached in churches whenever opportunity offered; but most of the London pulpits were closed to him. By the end of 1738 there were not more than three or four churches in London in which he was allowed to preach. This fact that he was so promptly excluded from the pulpits of London is often said to be a proof of the decay of vital religion in England. And so it is. Yet there is something to be said in defence of the action of the churches. The new zeal of Wesley, as we have seen, and as he himself afterward confessed, often found expression in forms that must have seemed to those not in sympathy with him extravagant and censorious. He did not, in fact, always maintain a modest or conciliatory temper. In a correspondence with William Law during the summer of 1738, he ventured to rebuke and correct the venerable teacher to whom he owed so much, in a tone of inexcusable positiveness, neither just nor courteous. Samuel Wesley, writing to Mrs. Hutton with reference to his brother's extravagances, owned a fear that perpetual intenseness of thought and want of sleep may have disordered Jack's intellect. The doctrines Wesley was preaching were doubtless, when properly stated, as he said, only those held by English divines ever since the Reformation; yet, in his extreme and mandatory forms of statement, they were

sure to provoke dissent. It is not surprising that a good many of the clergy, by no means worldly minded, should decline to be censured a second time from their own pulpits by this young stranger from Georgia who seemed attempting to show that the Christianity they preached, and he had himself until recently professed, was not Christianity at all.

But most of Wesley's influence in the latter part of this year 1738 was exerted through another form of organization destined to play a very important part in all his later work. Both in Oxford and in Georgia, as we have seen, he had favored the union of religious persons in groups or private societies for mutual counsel and encouragement. Societies of this kind, it should be understood, were no device of Wesley's; they had existed in the English Church for more than fifty years. There were at that time several in London, in which, as we learn from the Journal, Wesley spoke and expounded the Scriptures during the months following his return from Germany. These were Church societies; but in May Wesley had formed — or, at all events, had been prominent in forming — a little society of a somewhat different sort. It was suggested by Peter Böhler; and its conditions of membership, the plan of dividing its members into small groups, or "bands," of not less than five or more than ten, each band meeting by itself twice a week and all together on Wednesday evenings, its monthly love-feast, its insistence that the members should have no secrets from one another, even in personal matters, — all these features were patterned closely after the Moravian usage at Herrnhut. And most of its members were London Moravians. Indeed, it was, to all intents and purposes, a Moravian brotherhood

rather than a Church society. The regular weekly meetings of this society were held in a room in Fetter Lane; and it became for a time the centre of Wesley's London work. By the time of his return from the continent in September, it had grown from ten members to thirty-two, and the next New Year's Day he records that a love-feast held at Fetter Lane was attended by seven ministers — all of them his old Oxford friends of the Holy Club — and sixty laymen. Thus teaching and expounding in the Societies and in private houses, reading prayers and exhorting in prisons and workhouses, preaching in the three or four London churches yet occasionally opened to him, with two short visits to Oxford, Wesley passed the time until at the end of the next March, 1739, a new and wider field of labor opened before him.

During the winter of 1738–1739, the representative of the Methodist movement most prominent in the eye of the public was not John Wesley but George Whitefield. In the previous year, 1737, while Wesley was in Georgia, Whitefield, though a young man of only twenty-one just out of the University, won sudden and most extraordinary reputation as a preacher. In Gloucester, his native place, and in Bristol, crowds filled the churches to hear him every day in the week. He had accepted Wesley's call to come out to Savannah, and when he went up to London to solicit aid for the Georgia mission, he found eager throngs awaiting him there. In three months he preached a hundred times in London and collected a thousand pounds. Wesley, influenced probably by his own failure, had advised him at the last moment not to go to Georgia; but he

wisely disregarded the advice, and his reception in the colony was in striking contrast to that accorded Wesley. He made friends everywhere; and after a stay of six months, returned with the cordial good will of the colonists, to take priest's orders and to collect moneys for the orphanage he had founded in Savannah. He reached London early in December of 1738, and was warmly welcomed by Wesley, who hurried up from Oxford to greet him.

But Whitefield found that, while the people were as eager as ever to hear him, the churches were not now so ready to receive him. The clergy generally regarded him with suspicion as the friend and disciple of the Wesleys. He was told by the Bishop of London — who had just been reproving Wesley — that his teaching was tinctured with enthusiasm. He managed to preach a number of times in London, but by the end of January all the pulpits of the city were closed against him. Then, shut out of London, he went down to Bristol where he had been so gladly received a year and a half before. But here, also, he found, to his surprise, that he was to be silenced. He was informed that he could not preach in St. Mary Redcliffe's, or any other Bristol church without a license from the Chancellor of the city; the Chancellor refused to grant a license until after hearing from the Bishop of the diocese, and advised him to leave the city. "Why did you not require a license from the clergyman that preached last Thursday?" asked Whitefield. "That is nothing to you," was the cool reply. The Dean of St. Mary's, when asked whether Whitefield might preach for the orphanage in Georgia, "could not tell," and postponed definite answer on the plea of urgent busi-

ness at that hour. Thus denied the pulpits of Bristol, Whitefield suddenly took a most important resolution. Four miles northeast of Bristol was a rough tract of country called Kingswood, inhabited by a class of men who never saw the inside of a church, and never heard the voice of a preacher. The colliers of Kingswood were perhaps the worst specimens of the English populace. Ignorant, lewd, profane, and brutal, they were the terror of the law and the despair of philanthropy. It was to these people that Whitefield now turned. On February 17 he preached in the open air on Kingswood Common. About a hundred grimy, brawling colliers had assembled to hear him; when, three weeks later, he preached for the fifth time, there were ten thousand. He had found a new pulpit, from which no ecclesiastical authorities could exclude him; and an audience no church could ever have collected.

The decision once taken to preach in the open air, there were opportunities enough to speak and no lack of hearers. A gentleman gave him the use of a bowling-green in the heart of Bristol, and here he addressed audiences of eight to ten thousand. He preached in a dozen different places outside the city and in neighboring towns, and in some instances as many as twenty thousands person are said to have gathered to hear him. Filled with enthusiasm at the success of this new form of missionary effort, he was eager to carry his message to the unchurched multitudes of London. But he did not wish to leave the thousands who had been hearing him all uncared for. He bethought himself of Wesley, whose gifts of instruction and organization he knew to be superior to his own, and wrote to London urgently requesting Wesley to come to Bristol and take charge

of the great work begun there. Wesley hesitated. His time was fully and profitably occupied in London. His many friends protested against his leaving them. His brother Charles was especially urgent that he must not go. Uncertain what he ought to do, he referred the matter to the Fetter Lane Society; but they were divided in their counsels, and the question was at last decided, after the Moravian fashion, by opening the Bible at random and observing the significance of the first passage that met the eye. Wesley says he had felt the more reluctant to go, when, some days before, he had tried this biblical sortilege by himself, and opened upon the verse, "And devout men carried Stephen to his burial and made great lamentation for him"; it is not very clear how he could find opposite leading in the passage that decided the Fetter Lane trial, "And Ahaz slept with his fathers, and they buried him in the city, even in Jerusalem." In this case, as in most similar ones, it is easy to conjecture that the divine will was interpreted in accordance with the inclination of the seeker.

Wesley arrived in Bristol on Saturday, March 31. Next day he heard Whitefield preach in the open air; and disliked it much. He could hardly reconcile himself to it, he says, having all his life been so accustomed to insist rigidly upon all points of order and decency that he thought the saving of souls almost a sin unless it were done in a church. But if he was to continue Whitefield's work, there seemed no other way. Next day, Monday, April 1, at four in the afternoon, with great reluctance, and feeling that he was making himself vile by such a breach of all proprieties, he stood on a little eminence just outside the city, and spoke to

three thousand listeners. With unconscious prophetic truth he took for his text: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the Gospel to the poor. He hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted; to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovery of sight to the blind; to set at liberty them that are bruised, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord." What were the results of that sermon we do not know; but we know that within the next month Wesley preached again and again in the open air, till his audiences during the month aggregated forty thousand persons. That Monday was a fortunate day for him and for the world. A new chapter in his religious life is beginning. He has passed out of the feverish, introverted temper gendered by the excessive Moravian influence. Henceforth we find in his Journal no more doubts, no more unhealthy self-examinations. His soul is saved, because he has found his work. John Wesley, the ascetic, the uneasy, self-questioning mystic, has passed into John Wesley, the evangelist and reformer, his parish the world and his message to all sorts and conditions of men.

CHAPTER IV

THE EARLY WORK

1739–1742

All historians of society are agreed that both the morals and the religion of England, in 1740, were in need of reform. If the little circle of people immediately about the court were less openly dissolute than in the Restoration period seventy-five years before, their manners were more vulgar. A sodden coarseness characterized what called itself the best society. King George II united the morals of a rake with the tastes of a boor. Queen Caroline, a woman of great native force of character, while not herself chargeable with infidelity, made the gross vices of her husband the subject of broad jests, and, on the testimony of the Duchess of Marlborough, — herself a proverb for coarseness, — seldom was in her drawing-room half an hour without saying something shocking. Robert Walpole, the prime minister and ablest statesman of his age, had no tastes above those of the cock-pit and the stable, sneered at virtue in man or woman, scandalized even that age by the boisterous debaucheries of his country house at Houghton, and lived in avowed adultery through the greater part of his career. Under the reign of Anne, the urbane satire of Steele and Addison had done something to bring into fashion, for a time, a decent social morality and at least some outward

respect for religion; but despite these influences, what called itself fashionable society grew steadily more lax in morals and negligent in manners through the second quarter of the century. A period of commercial prosperity only made morals worse. All the loud, ostentatious vices that often accompany a rapid increase in wealth had probably never before been so prevalent in English society as during the reign of the second George. The dress, the equipage, the entertainments of the upper classes all showed a glaring extravagance untempered either by taste or by morality. Cards were the usual form of entertainment in all social assemblies, and the stakes were very high. Lady Cowper, one of the maids of honor, excused herself from play at one of the drawing-rooms because no one thought of putting down less than two hundred pounds. The mania for gaming in all forms pervaded society. Ladies did their shopping where with every purchase they were given a ticket for a raffle; public enterprises were supported by lottery schemes in which everybody bought shares; and the whole nation for some months went mad over the gigantic South Sea Bubble that beggared nobles and drove scores of deluded speculators to suicide. Fashionable amusements were either coarse or vapid. The stage was mostly given over to farces and spectacles. Music, the one form of art in which the King took any interest, received very little encouragement; Lord Chesterfield once retired from a scantily attended performance of one of Händel's oratorios before the Court, with the witty excuse that he feared he was disturbing his Majesty's privacy. A more favorite form of fashionable amusement in the theatres and public gardens was the masquerade or masked ball, often known as

the "ridotto." They furnished opportunity for violations of all propriety so flagrant that Miss Chudleigh, one of the Queen's maids of honor, hardly provoked remonstrance when she appeared one evening, almost entirely naked, in the character of Iphigenia. Yet in spite of the denunciations of the clergy and of protests from the Grand Jury of Middlesex, they continued to be given till after the middle of the century.

The public manners of good society were everywhere very lax. Horace Walpole tells a characteristic story of five lords and three pretty young ladies who accepted the invitation of Lady Caroline Petersham to spend an evening at Vauxhall. One of the lords was "very drunk" all the time and pestered the ladies with his maudlin attentions; Lady Caroline minced seven chickens and stewed them in a dish over a lamp, while the vivacious converse of the ladies drew the attention of the whole garden, and Sir Harry Vane "drank the healths" of the crowd that assembled around their booth.[1] In such places of public resort drunkenness was hardly a matter of reproach, and profanity, loud and open, might often have been heard on the lips of fine ladies, unabashed and unrebuked. How vapid and how coarse was the talk of lords and ladies in smaller companies or at home may be seen in the bitter satire of Swift's "Polite Conversation." About the middle of the century this universal rudeness produced, in a certain section of society best represented by Lord Chesterfield, a tendency to reaction which expressed itself in an elaborate artificiality of speech and manner; but the temper thus veiled was essentially immoral and often, indeed, essentially vulgar. It is doubtless

[1] Walpole to Montagu, June 23, 1750.

unjust to draw inferences as to a whole class from instances of depravity so exceptional as to receive contemporary notice and record; but the concurrent testimony of history and literature forces us to believe that never before had what called itself the best society of England shown less refinement, intelligence, or purity than at just the moment when John Wesley began his work.

At the opposite social extreme was the great mass of ignorant, restless, half-brutalized population which we have learned to call "submerged." This element was relatively no larger then than now, but now society is better policed, and the crime and savagery of its lowest section more effectively repressed. The picture of the under side of life in England during the second quarter of the eighteenth century is appalling. Drunkenness was almost universal. Mr. Lecky considers the sudden growth of the passion for gin drinking which took possession of the English people about 1725 to be the most important fact in the history of the century, "incomparably more so than any event in the purely political or military annals of the country." Parliamentary measures of taxation intended to diminish the evil were met by riots and proved altogether inoperative. In 1750 London physicians reported fourteen thousand cases of illness, most of them hopeless, due to the use of gin. The next year Fielding declared this liquor to be actually "the principal sustenance (if so it may be called) of more than one hundred thousand people in the metropolis" — and this when, it will be remembered, the entire population of London was under eight hundred thousand. Every sixth house in London was a gin shop. Of course crime increased pro-

portionately. The parks and gardens where the lower classes resorted were the scenes of vulgar debauchery and violence. When Whitefield first ventured to speak in Moorfields, one of the worst spots in London, his friends predicted that he would never come out alive. After nightfall, London was at the mercy of footpads and desperadoes. Indeed, assault and robbery were not uncommon on the London streets in broad daylight. Just outside the city, in Hampstead or Hackney, coaches were stopped almost every day and their passengers plundered. It was the heroic age of highway robbery; Jack Sheppard, Jonathan Wild, and Dick Turpin, all three ended their career on the gallows between 1724 and 1740. The laws were savage but ineffectual. The infliction of the death penalty alike for murder and for petty theft tended to increase crimes of violence. Public executions at Tyburn were a form of popular recreation attended by great crowds from all classes; and as many as a score of criminals were sometimes turned off in a single morning. The prisons, which were mostly occupied by poor debtors, were sinks of filth, stench, and disease such as it is now difficult to conceive.

Throughout the country things were little better. Cock-fighting and bull-baiting were still the favorite amusements of the lower class, and every prominent town could furnish a mob of lewd and shiftless fellows ready for any brutal excitement. There were as yet few good roads to connect the larger towns and to serve the spread of intelligence. The agricultural laboring class, though not turbulent, were isolated, ignorant, stolid. It is significant that Wesley, who had known these people in Epworth and Wroote, always deemed

the rural peasantry almost inaccessible to good influences. Referring in his Journal to the poetic encomiums often passed on a country life, he exclaims: "What a flat contradiction is this to universal experience. Our eyes and ears may convince us there is not a less happy body of men in all England than the country farmers. In general their life is supremely dull; and it is usually unhappy too." Wherever any form of industry called together large numbers of ignorant, unskilled workmen, the restraints of orderly society were almost entirely removed; the colliers of Yorkshire and the miners of Cornwall were little better than hordes of wild men. For this lawless mass of humanity, in city and in country, that surged about the foundations of society, decent, order-loving folk had only hatred and threats of punishment. Philanthropy was hopeless of them. It was noticed that those charitable and reforming societies which had been organized in the reign of Anne had accomplished nothing for them. The church seemed powerless to take religion to them; it was certain they would never come to the church.

Yet it was among these people that the first Methodist preachers found attentive audiences. A few weeks before Whitefield began to preach to the Kingswood colliers, in a Bristol riot they were "playing such mad pranks that one would doubt there were any law still in being." Six months later, hundreds of them were enrolled in Wesley's societies, and were supporting a school established for them. Moorfields, which Whitefield called truly enough "a stronghold of Satan," in two years became a stronghold of London Methodism. If the lowest classes in England grew better through the last half of the century rather than worse; if respect

for law and reverence for religion penetrated to those masses at the bottom of society upon the decency and order of which the stability of the social structure so largely depends; if a rabid revolt against all established things, such as disgraced the worst period of the French Revolution, was impossible in England; the historian must pronounce that this improvement was due, in no small degree, to the influence of the Methodist movement.

But it is neither in the highest nor in the lowest orders of society that we must look for the greatest results of Methodism. The most important fact in English history during the eighteenth century is the rise of a new middle class. Active, pushing, practical, largely occupied in trade and the various forms of skilled labor, the men of this class were increasingly interested in public affairs, and it was evident that they would sometime hold the balance of political power in England. They were crowding into the cities and changing the ratio of urban to country population. They were growing wealthy, too; some considerable portion of the national debt England had been piling up during the reigns of William and Anne was already in their hands, and it was largely their money that was to fight England's battles for the next fifty years. To them belonged the future; on them, in no small degree, depended the fate of constitutional government and the permanence of ordered society. Neither political party could afford to slight them; but by virtue of their humble birth and their commercial and mechanical pursuits they were naturally prejudiced against the landed aristocracy and in sympathy with the Whigs. Though rather narrow in ideas, they were active-minded and not unintelligent;

they were coming to be a reading class. For them the pamphlet was written; many of the able pamphleteers, like Defoe, were themselves of this class. Indeed, it is easy to trace in all the literature of the time a more democratic cast. The new school of fiction, for example, beginning with the story of a maid-of-all-work in Richardson's "Pamela," finds its themes and its characters almost exclusively in the life of this middle class. The average morality of people in this grade of society was probably quite as healthy as that in the higher ranks, but they had perhaps even less regard for religion. Living mostly in cities and large towns, removed from the traditional reverence which lingers longest in the shadow of the country church, they rather prided themselves on their emancipation from conventions. Many of them were dissenters; but many more were virtually without any religion. Yet to men of this stamp the positive demands and promises of Methodism made a powerful appeal. These were the people who filled up Wesley's societies and furnished all his lay preachers.

But while you can say a great many unhandsome things truly enough against the morality of English society of the mid-eighteenth century, the gravest charge against that society is not that it was immoral, but that it was irreligious. The majority of the English people were then, as they always have been, decent and virtuous folk; but they were not religious. The religious man is the man filled with a sense of the presence of God and of the force of spiritual laws *here* and *now*, convinced of an immediate relation between himself and the Supreme Being. This and this only makes a truly religious man in any age and in any country. And

this is precisely what we do not find in the men of this eighteenth century. There were scores of deaneries and hundreds of rectories all over the land that were the abode of a sincere and comely churchmanship; but even the best men, men like Addison or Bishop Gibson and Bishop Butler, indubitably sincere men, were not in this highest sense religious. The test of excellence, for the eighteenth century, in religion as well as in politics, art, literature, was reason, moderation, good sense. Everything was required to justify itself before the logical intellect. Religion must, first of all, be rational, free from superstition and from fanaticism. There were, moreover, reasons why this temper of the age should show itself especially in religion. The heats of controversy ever since the Reformation in England had wearied people of all pronounced expression of religious opinion. The reaction against Puritanism at the time of the Restoration had not been followed by any very general decline of morality, but it had produced a distrust of all lofty ideals in politics and in religion. We have had enough, men said, of New Lights and New Models; now let us follow our reason like men of sense. They were afraid, above all things, of extravagant pretensions, of anything that savored of enthusiasm. The very word "Zeal" was a red rag to all Englishmen for seventy-five years. It is said that the two texts on which most sermons were preached in England during the first half of the eighteenth century were, "Let your moderation be known to all men," and "Be not righteous overmuch." The school of Deists at the beginning of the century had attacked Christianity as irrational; the Churchmen who defended it had been so anxious to prove it rational that they had left little

supernatural in it. Great stress was laid on the moral evidences of Christianity and its harmony with natural religion; very little was said as to its distinctively divine and supernatural warrant. The older and more evangelical language fell into disuse, or was used with little of its olden meaning. There was a special dread of any statements that seemed to depreciate the reason or to substitute individual emotional experiences for rational proof. This distrust was felt very keenly by some of the most devout Churchmen, and explains their sincere opposition to the teaching of Wesley and his preachers. Bishop Butler, whose "Analogy" had just been published, said to Wesley as he was beginning his Bristol preaching in the spring of 1739, "Sir, the pretending to extraordinary revelations and gifts of the Holy Ghost is a horrid thing, a very horrid thing."

Yet the orthodox churchmanship of England at that moment needed nothing so much as that intimate personal assurance of spiritual verities which it timidly branded as enthusiasm. Its belief was an uncertain balance of probabilities. Its motives were at bottom prudential. Its preachers were denouncing the "folly" of an evil life, and exhorting their hearers to make the best of both worlds. Such a religion could not speak with authority. It could not touch the deeper springs of action. It might be discussed, believed, even practised; to talk of "experiencing" it would be meaningless. Moreover, a religion with so little of the contagious warmth of certainty could make no converts, could stir no missionary impulse. "What is your religion, my lord?" some one asked Lord Bolingbroke. "The religion of all sensible men," was the reply. "Yes, but what is that?" "Ah, that is what no sensible man

ever tells." The anecdote is told of different persons, and may be apocryphal; but it illustrates well enough the limited and individual character of the convictions most men held upon religious subjects. It is clear that the religion of the time had little hold upon the lives even of those who professed it. Party politics had gathered about it; its solemn observances had been made the condition of admission to civil office. A prime minister could take the sacrament in St. Paul's to qualify for office, and then go home to write an essay against the credibility of revealed religion. The bitter irony of men like Dean Swift and the despairing protest of men like Bishop Butler alike attest that the spirit and power of religion seemed to them well-nigh worn out of the country. Most people simply didn't think about it. With the more reflective class a cold and shallow optimism, like that in the writings of Pope and Bolingbroke, took the place of faith in God and love to man. Such words as sin, and sorrow, and love were not in their vocabulary. The world was full of evils, doubtless, they said, but the philosopher will not magnify them. No extravagant desire, no enervating sympathy; either one savors of enthusiasm. It may not be the best of all possible worlds; but, at all events, we can make the best of it.

"The world is very ill, we see,
  We do not comprehend it:
But in one point we all agree —
  God won't, — and we can't, mend it.
Being common sense it can't be sin
  To take it as I find it;
The pleasure, to take pleasure in,
  The pain — try not to mind it."

These lines of a modern poet [1] might not inaccurately

[1] Arthur Hugh Clough.

express the temper of thousands upon thousands of decent and virtuous folk when Wesley began his work. On the baser classes, not so decent or virtuous, neither the promises nor the warnings of Christianity seemed to have any influence.

Such was the world in which John Wesley began his preaching in 1739. He remained in Bristol until the middle of June, and for two years thereafter divided his time mostly between that city and London. With his methodical habits, he formed a plan of work in Bristol which occupied him almost every hour for every day in the week. Every morning he read prayers in a chapel at Newgate; in the evening he expounded the Scriptures in some one of the "Societies," of which there were several in Bristol. He had a schedule of appointments to preach in the open air, every afternoon, in places in or near Bristol, and on Sundays he usually preached five times. Thus he preached on an average twelve times a week, besides speaking in the Societies. It is estimated that he preached over five hundred times in the last nine months of that year, and only five times in churches. He built a chapel in the Horse Fair, near the centre of Bristol, which would provide a convenient meeting-place for two of the largest societies, and serve as a headquarters for Methodist work in the city. He had intended to vest the ownership of the chapel in eleven trustees; but on being advised by Whitefield and other friends that this might put the building altogether out of his control, he changed his mind, and with the consent of the trustees, cancelled the deed, and had the title of the property vested in himself. It was the mode of procedure usually followed in

similar cases through all the earlier years of his preaching, so that in the next twenty years he became sole proprietor of scores of Methodist Chapels all over the island. Interested as he always was in the education of the people, he carried through a plan proposed by Whitefield to establish a school at Kingswood for the children of the poor colliers. Wesley secured money, erected a building, and opened the school early in 1740. He enlarged Whitefield's plan by providing instruction evenings and in the early morning hours for colliers who were obliged to be in the pits all day.

In the meantime, before midsummer of 1739, Whitefield's open-air preaching in London had become the sensation of the town. His audiences were even vaster than they had been in Bristol; and he was listened to with equal admiration by the great folk at Blackheath and the lowest London populace in Moorfields. The concourse in the latter place is said on some occasions to have numbered no fewer than sixty thousand; and Whitefield himself states in his diary that he once preached at Hyde Park Corner to the incredibly large audience of eighty thousand persons. When he spoke on Kennington Common there were not boats enough on the Thames to carry over the crowds that flocked thither. Inevitably there was criticism and opposition. The Methodists were charged with disturbing public order, with turning worship into tumult and riot. It is said that Whitefield's audiences, however large, always listened to him attentively; indeed, they must have listened if they heard anything. Yet such vast crowds in the open air, made up largely of people not accustomed to keep their emotions under restraint and now swayed by the most dramatic of orators, could hardly be ex-

pected to observe a churchly decorum. It is not strange that this mode of preaching, which until very lately had seemed to Wesley an inexcusable violation of the reverent proprieties of worship, should be bitterly opposed by most of the clergy. Whitefield did not use the liturgy; his prayers were extemporaneous; and he certainly employed in the delivery of his sermons all the arts both of the actor and the popular orator. He was indubitably sincere and intensely in earnest; but many candid people, churchmen and dissenters, in sympathy with his purposes, had to admit that they could find but little content of clear and sound thought in his sermons, and that he frequently allowed himself violent or extravagant language unbecoming in a preacher of the Gospel. The good Dr. Doddridge, who heard him on Kennington Common, thought him a sincere, "but a weak man — much too positive, says rash things, and is bold and enthusiastic. I think what he says and does come but little short of an assumption of inspiration or infallibility." And Dr. Watts, in an interview with the eloquent young field preacher in August of this year, felt it necessary to warn him against the irregularities and imprudences which youth and zeal might lead him into. In truth, the permanent measurable results of Whitefield's preaching seem to have been disproportionate to its temporary influence. It was of incalculable value in turning the serious attention of so many thousands to matters of religion; yet when one considers how vast were the multitudes that followed to hear the preacher, one is surprised to find no evidence that any considerable number of them joined the churches or any of the religious societies in London. Whitefield was a preacher and little else; he had not the gift to

confirm and teach and shepherd his converts. In this respect, as in many others, he was in striking contrast with Wesley.

It was this very superiority of Wesley as teacher and pastor, however, that specially exposed him to ecclesiastical censure. He was doing the work that, in a very special sense, belonged to the parish priest. Bishop Butler said to him in Bristol, "Sir, since you ask my advice, I will give it freely — you have no business here; you are not commissioned to preach in this diocese. Therefore I advise you to go hence." Samuel Wesley, who could not bring himself to approve the action of his brothers, only a few days before his death wrote to his mother: "My brothers design separation. They are already forbidden all the pulpits in London; and to preach in that diocese is actual schism. In all likelihood it will come to the same all over England, if the bishops have courage enough. . . . As I told Jack, I am not afraid the Church should excommunicate him (discipline is at too low an ebb), but that he should excommunicate the Church. It is pretty near it." It is idle to deny that the conduct of Wesley and Whitefield was irregular. There was no provision in the polity of the Church of England for such work as they were doing. To preach in the fields, to abridge or abandon the liturgy, to organize within the parishes of Church of England priests "societies" and "bands," fashioned after a Moravian model and governed by rules of their own devising, to persist in teaching which, whether in harmony with the doctrines of the Church or not, was disapproved and disavowed by the bishops of the dioceses where they taught, — all this was certainly in disregard, if not in defiance, of ecclesiastical order and discipline.

Wesley's only defence was that he must obey God rather than man. He had no thought of leaving the Church and no wish to violate its discipline. The doctrines he taught were, he claimed, only those which the Church of England had always professed, but now forgotten. His violations of discipline were forced upon him; he preached in the fields only because he was not allowed to preach anywhere else. In a letter written in the summer of 1739 to a friend who charged him with intermeddling "with souls that did not belong to him," he states his position at length and with much feeling:—

"God in Scripture commands me according to my power to instruct the ignorant, reform the wicked, confirm the virtuous. Man forbids me to do this in another's parish; that is, in effect to do it at all: seeing I have now no parish of my own, nor probably ever shall. Whom then shall I hear: God or Man? . . . I look upon the world as my parish; thus far, I mean, that, in whatever part of it I am, I judge it meet, right, and my bounden duty to declare unto all that are willing to hear the glad tidings of salvation."

It was the misfortune of the Church that its authorities could not perceive the sore need at that time of just such a man as this; that they could not overlook any extravagances or minor errors for the sake of that assured faith and intense devotion which could put new warmth and vigor into the Church and lead thousands of unchurched people into a righteous and pious life.

The fear of fanatical excitement from the influence of the Methodists was heightened, and to a certain extent justified, by a series of singular physical effects attending the preaching of Wesley, in and about Bris-

tol, during this summer. At the meetings in societies or in private houses, scenes like the following, described in the Journal, were for a time not infrequent: —

"*April* 21. At Weaver's Hall a young man was suddenly seized with violent trembling all over, and in a few moments sank to the ground. But we ceased not calling upon God, till he raised him up full of peace and joy."

"*May* 21. In the evening I was interrupted at Nicholas Street almost as soon as I had begun to speak by the cries of one who was pricked at the heart and strongly groaned for pardon and peace. Yet I went on to declare what God had already done in proof of that important truth that he is 'not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.' Another person dropped down, close to one who was a strong assertor of the contrary doctrine. While he stood astonished at the sight, a little boy near him was seized in the same manner. A young man who stood up behind fixed his eyes on him, and sank down himself as one dead; but soon began to roar out, and beat himself against the ground, so that six men could scarcely hold him. His name was Thomas Maxfield."

"*June* 22. In the society one before me dropped down as dead, and presently a second, and a third. Five others sank down in half an hour; most of whom were in violent agonies. In their trouble we called upon the Lord and he gave us an answer of peace."

About sixty such cases of physical prostration, some few painful and prolonged, but most of short duration, are recorded in the Journal. In some instances such symptoms may have been simulated, and in many more the hysterical excitement may have been half-

unconsciously welcomed by the subject as a sign of genuine repentance. It is significant that when Charles Wesley, on one occasion, announced before beginning his sermon, that any "stricken down" during the preaching would be quietly removed from the room, no one was stricken. Yet most of the cases recorded in the Journal are indubitably genuine. The careful reader will notice, however, that the seizures seldom occurred at any of Wesley's services in the open air, but generally, though not always, in small and crowded rooms; and that they were nearly all confined to the vicinity of Bristol, and to a period of a few months in the summer of 1739. It is not true that they characterized the Methodist movement, or that they accompanied the preaching of Wesley throughout his career; indeed, they were not experienced by any considerable number of his converts even in that year. It is singular that no such results attended the preaching of Whitefield, though far more impassioned than Wesley's. Whitefield, in fact, wrote to expostulate with Wesley for encouraging such physical manifestations. But Wesley never did encourage them. Nor was his preaching drastic and minatory; he did not terrify people with lurid pictures of future punishment; on the contrary, it is evident from the Journal that his preaching was concerned almost entirely with the invitations and promises of the Gospel. Yet while Wesley was less eloquent than Whitefield, he spoke by preference, not like Whitefield to vast audiences, but to a small company gathered immediately about him. Whitefield sought to sway a multitude as one man; Wesley sought to influence immediately individual men. It is evident that his calm and simple but direct and

intense address must have been very impressive. He expected that men who came to hear him as drunkards, thieves, brawlers, would go away converted — thenceforth to be pious and righteous men. And they did, by hundreds. Preaching like Wesley's had not been heard in England for near a century; and it is not at all strange that it should have been sometimes attended by such physical phenomena as have always been frequent in periods of strong emotional excitement. And if these phenomena do not prove the teaching that seems to occasion them to be true, they certainly do not prove it to be false or even fanatical.

Wesley himself undoubtedly believed these strange experiences to be due to supernatural influence, sometimes divine, sometimes diabolical, and sometimes with a curious logic, he seems to ascribe them to both. Yet he was careful not to vouch for their supernatural character. He says: "I relate just what I saw. Some of the circumstances seem to go beyond the ordinary course of nature. But I do not peremptorily determine whether they were supernatural or not. Much less do I rest upon them either the proof of other facts, or of the doctrines which I preached." To his brother Samuel, who was much disturbed by what he heard of John's preaching, he wrote protesting that his work should not be judged by any such strange physical accompaniments, whatever be their cause, but rather by the fact that in hundreds of instances, in his meetings, the lion had been changed to the lamb, the drunkard to the sober man, the spirit of despair to the spirit of hope and peace. These, he says, justly, are my "living arguments."

The truth is, Wesley's own temperament was so cool

and self-possessed that he often overestimated the significance of emotion in hearers of a more unrestrained disposition. He measured these outward expressions by the strength of the causes he knew would have been necessary to produce them in himself. It is quite true that only something very like a miracle could ever have made *him* fall in convulsions, or lose in any wise his self-control; he did not realize that the average man, without culture and the restraint that comes of long obedience to the conventions of society, can be violently moved without any very unusual agency.

In August of 1739, Whitefield left England for another visit to America. After this Wesley naturally found it necessary to be oftener in London, though his brother Charles was in an especial sense in charge of the work there, and was recognized as the pastor of the Moravians and Methodists of London. Wesley had no thought of founding a new sect, or building up any elaborate religious organization. He was intent only on carrying the Gospel everywhere, and especially on carrying it to those who seemed to have otherwise little chance of hearing it. But the religious movement which was now beginning to have influence and recognition — friendly or hostile — over a great part of the south of England, evidently needed some direction and control. Hundreds of people were beginning a religious life who had never seen the inside of a church, and with whom the regular parish clergy had little sympathy. It was important that they should have some uniform and intelligent teaching, and some sort of helpful religious association. Little by little, without intending to make or to assume any such position, Wesley

found himself coming to the leadership of a definite, closely centralized organization.

The first step toward such an organization was the separation of the Methodists from the Moravians. The Fetter Lane Society, as we have seen, was originally composed largely of Moravians, and their doctrine and discipline provoked at first no dissent from the other members. But as the number of members increased from the preaching of the Wesleys and Whitefield, there began to be discord. This tendency was increased when a Moravian pastor from Jena, named Molther, appeared on the scene late in 1739 and attempted to impose his views upon the society. Molther advocated a pronounced form of quietism. If the brethren had not yet received the desired gift of faith, — and he induced many of them to be in doubt of it, — they were instructed to wait for it in quiet. Molther discouraged all active effort, all use of the "means of grace." Indeed, there were, he said, no means of grace, grace being the immediate gift of God. Reading the Scriptures, speaking or exhortation, even prayer and the Lord's Supper, were means on which the soul might come to depend, and so were not helps but hindrances to the attainment of faith; while the confirmed believer was at liberty to use these and any other religious ordinances and exercises, but equally at liberty not to use them. To Wesley such doctrine as this was a dangerous heresy. Whatever theories of Christian experience he may have held at various times, his test of the religious life was always outward and practical. He could have little patience, therefore, with teaching that seemed to cut the nerve of all useful activity, and to enjoin an attitude of passive expectancy or enjoyment. And any sympathy with

this quietism was doubly impossible for him now that he had entered upon his more active evangelistic work. The Moravians, on the other hand, looked with dislike on the public and aggressive methods of Whitefield and the Wesleys, and disapproved the tumult and physical excitement that accompanied their preaching. Moreover, they were jealous of the predominance of the Wesleys in the Fetter Lane Society, and charged them with arrogance and self-seeking. Alarmed at the growing differences in the Fetter Lane Society, Wesley came up to London in June with the hope to compose them. But his efforts then, and during longer visits in the course of the next year, were of little avail. Many of his converts, who had been devout and active, now, under the Moravian influence, had come to doubt whether they were ever in the faith, and were disposed to "be still" till they found out. They not only gave up the ordinances of religion themselves, but persuaded others to do so, and shocked Wesley by talking of "the folly of running about to church and sacrament." The meetings of the society were either disputatious or dull and lifeless. "Nothing of brotherly love among them," says Wesley of one evening, "but a harsh, dry, heavy, stupid spirit. For two hours they looked one at another, when they looked up at all, as if one-half of them was afraid of the other." Molther, who since his arrival had learned to preach in tolerable English, in the spring of 1740 practically assumed the leadership of the society. He was earnest and conscientious, but more arrogant than became his years and knowledge, and he at once assumed, as Böhler had done, the superior attitude toward Wesley of spiritual counsellor. But Wesley had learned much for himself in the past

year, and was not likely to take the position of humble disciple before this young divinity student. They had two long conferences, in which, as might have been expected, they did little but to reaffirm with greater emphasis each his own opinions. Wesley labored by preaching and by private counsel and expostulation to check the heresy; but the Molther faction was too strong within the society, and at last, at the middle of July, 1740, he was informed that he could no longer preach in the Fetter Lane rooms. The next Sunday evening, at the close of the love feast, he rose in his place and read a paper in which he had set down briefly the points at issue between himself and his Moravian brethren; and after protesting that he had done all in his power to convince them of their error, solemnly declared that he must withdraw from them, and invited any like minded to accompany him. Without another word he left the room, and eighteen or nineteen followed him. From that hour the Moravian and the Methodist movement were separate. One must regret a sharp difference between bodies of Christians who had so much in common. Yet the separation, one can now see, was sure to come sooner or later, and it was fortunate for Methodism. It is probably true, as Wesley claimed, that the doctrines of Molther and his supporters were not sanctioned by the general authorities of the Moravian Church; but the genus of Moravianism and that of Methodism were essentially different. The tendency to isolation and clannishness, the introspection and overemphasis upon inner spiritual states, the insistence upon quiet and distrust of active evangelical effort, — all these characteristics of the Moravian temper would have ill suited with the work

Wesley and his preachers had to do in the next half-century.

The "eighteen or nineteen" who withdrew with John Wesley from the Fetter Lane Society found another and yet more memorable society waiting to receive them. Near the close of 1739, eight or ten persons earnestly desirous of leading a religious life came to Wesley, who was then in London, with a request that he would meet them regularly for prayer and counsel. He agreed to do so, as long as possible, and named Thursday evening as the time for such meeting. As he says, in telling the story, "The first evening about twelve persons came; the next week thirty or forty. When they were increased to about a hundred, I took down their names and places of abode, intending, as often as it was convenient, to call upon them at their houses. Thus, without any previous plan, began the Methodist Society in England, — a company of people associating together to help each other to work out their own salvation."

This was the first of those United Societies, which were the units of the great Methodist organization that was soon to spread over the island. This society found, almost as soon as it was formed, a place of meeting which was to become famous in the annals of Methodism. In the autumn of 1739 the weather was unusually cold, and Wesley, who had been preaching in the open air, accepted the invitation of two gentlemen in London, then unknown to him, that he should preach one November Sunday in a building then unused and vacant. Thirty years before, an accidental explosion had wrecked this building, in which cannon were then

being cast for the government, blowing off the roof, and killing several workmen. The authorities then decided to remove the ordnance works to Woolwich, and left this old Foundery in ruins. This was the gaunt and ruinous structure in which Wesley preached, and which he decided shortly after to purchase and refit as a preaching place and centre for his work in London, such as he had recently secured in Bristol. Money was borrowed to be repaid by subscriptions as fast as possible; some partial repairs were made to render the place habitable, and it was at once put to use for preaching and the meetings of the society. It stood on Windmill Street, near Finsbury Square, in a region where Wesley had frequently preached. When the alterations and repairs were completed it furnished a preaching room with benches on the floor and in the galleries running round the sides, that would accommodate some fifteen hundred people. The men sat in the side galleries and on one side of the main floor, the women on the other side and in the front gallery. Behind this room there was a "band room" seating some three hundred. One end of this room was seated, with desks, for a school; at the other end was an office or "Book Room" where Wesley's publications were sold. On the second story, over the band room, apartments were fitted up for Wesley's use, and here his mother passed her last years. An adjoining house was used for Wesley's assistants. Chapel, band room, parsonage, school, book store, dispensary, loan office — this building was for thirty-eight years the headquarters of Methodism and centre of all its varied forms of religious and charitable work. And almost every day, through all those years, its little bell called London Methodists to some service

of prayer or praise or preaching. This was the home of the society to which those who had withdrawn from Fetter Lane now joined themselves.

The London Society, reënforced by these seceders from Fetter Lane, and free from the dissensions of the last year, now grew rapidly; by the close of 1741 it numbered more than a thousand members. Meantime a similar organization was being effected in Bristol. There were in that city when Wesley first visited it several small societies; it was for the special use of two of them that he had built the Horse Fair Chapel. The other Methodists in Bristol were now united with these into one society, like that in London, meeting in the new chapel. The Kingswood people formed a society by themselves, meeting in their schoolhouse. These, with one formed about this time in Bath, were the only societies formally organized up to the end of 1740.

Persons were admitted to these societies only by Wesley and his brother Charles, and were given "tickets," attesting their membership and good standing. These tickets they were required to have renewed every quarter. Members idle or disorderly, or proving to be indifferent to a religious life, after warning and exhortation, were dropped. Thus at first the Wesleys maintained a direct supervision of the societies, and strove to have individual knowledge of the needs and the conduct of all their members. But this soon became impossible. In London Wesley soon found it necessary to appoint certain members of the society to visit the sick and the poor, and to report weekly. But there was evident and growing need of some more constant and detailed religious supervision and counsel than the Wesleys could possibly give. It was impossible for

them to meet personally, even once a quarter, the two thousand or more Methodists scattered through London and Bristol. The system of "Classes" which met this need sprang up in a quite unpremeditated way; it was not a device but a fortunate suggestion. One day early in 1742, the Bristol Society were discussing means to pay the debt that still remained on their chapel. One of the members proposed that every one should bring a penny to the evening meeting; and when it was objected that some were too poor to give even that, he volunteered to see eleven other members, during every week, and collect the penny where it could be afforded. Others promised to do the same thing, and thus the membership of the society fell into groups of twelve. "Then," says Wesley, "it struck me immediately, this is the very thing we have wanted so long." He called together the collectors, or "leaders," as they were thereafter called, and asked them to make a weekly report upon the behavior of those whom they visited. After a little it was found inconvenient for the leader to meet the members of his group at their own houses; many of them, being apprentices or servants, had no houses of their own. It was arranged that they should all meet him weekly, at a specified hour and place; and this was the Methodist "Class Meeting." The class leaders were appointed by Wesley, and met him at least once a quarter to give a detailed report of the condition of those intrusted to their charge. It was largely to receive these reports, and to give to the leaders his personal counsel and oversight that Wesley, in the next forty years, made his continual journeyings from one end of England to the other.

This plan was not received at first without some

natural opposition. Dissatisfied members claimed that they had not assented to any such supervision when they joined the societies; that they themselves had no voice in the election or dismissal of the leaders; that those leaders were often incompetent, neither wiser nor better than those they assumed to lead. But Wesley replied that it would be folly to refuse to adopt so good a plan simply because they had not been wise enough to think of it earlier; that while he refused to intrust the appointment of leaders to any one else, he was always ready to hear complaints if well supported, and if it seemed necessary, to replace unsatisfactory leaders by better ones. And experience amply proved Wesley to be right in his estimate of the value of the class meeting. It is difficult to conceive a form of association more profitable for the early Methodists, — however it may be for the later ones, — more likely to promote a practical, everyday religion, than this meeting, in small groups, of people of similar tastes, occupation, and social position, for counsel upon all matters pertaining to the daily conduct of life. And Wesley saw, of course, that by the appointment of the leaders and by his plan of quarterly visitation, he could maintain that close personal supervision of all the societies which he rightly deemed necessary to the unity and coherence of the movement now growing so rapidly. Wesley was not ambitious; never man had less of the selfish lust of power. If he slowly and half unconsciously perfected one of the most completely centralized ecclesiastical systems ever devised, it was because he felt himself deeply responsible for the instruction and guidance of the multitudes converted by his preaching, and found himself left almost alone to care for them. If for years

he held all the reins of power in his own hands, it was because there was no one else to hold them. One of the greatest administrators that ever lived, he could touch nothing without leaving upon it the stamp of his own energetic individuality; but he did nothing from the motive of personal aggrandizement.

One thing more was needed to complete the network of Wesley's institutions. To this Wesley soon felt himself forced. It must be remembered that the Methodist organization was, in Wesley's thought, entirely within the English Church. His societies were not, like the dissenting bodies, formed to provide for preaching and the administration of the sacraments; they were purely private associations for religious culture. It is true, as we have seen, that Wesley had strained ecclesiastical discipline rather severely by forming such societies without any reference to the parochial clergy or episcopal control, requiring of their members no formal recognition of the Church, and building meeting-houses for their use, the ownership of which vested in himself. Yet he still held that there was nothing in their constitution or usages essentially in violation of the canons of the Church. The societies met on Sundays, but never at the hours of church service. At these meetings there was preaching if Wesley or any other clergyman in orders was present and would preach; if not, the hour was spent in prayer and religious conference and exhortation. But by the end of 1740, Wesley and his brother Charles were almost the only clergymen in London or Bristol who would take part with the Methodists. Whitefield was in America. Of his other old Oxford friends who were in orders

Clayton, the High Churchman, now resident in Manchester, was out of sympathy with Wesley, Ingham was in Yorkshire and just about to go over to the Moravians, whom Gambold had already joined. The increasing number of Methodists were left largely without the ministrations of the clergy. Wesley always encouraged them to attend church in the parishes where they resided, and some of the London society did communicate in their own parishes; but they were slow to present themselves where they were evidently not welcome. In the autumn of 1741, Wesley was offered by a French clergyman the use of his small church in Wapping, and there he and his brother, for five successive Sundays, administered the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper to members of the Foundery Society, over a thousand in all. Charles Wesley performed the same office for the Kingswood colliers in their school building, and declared, good Churchman as he was, that if there were no other place allowed, he would have administered that Sacrament in the open air.

Still more serious, if possible, was the lack of authorized teaching and preaching. From exhorting before a society to formal preaching before it, would seem only a step; but to Wesley it seemed more than doubtful whether any layman ought to take that step. The master of the Kingswood School was one John Cennick, the son of Quakers, who had passed from a reckless youth, through an experience very like Bunyan's, to a cheerful and active manhood. There was a vein of poetry in him, and two of his hymns, — "Children of the Heavenly King" and "Thou Dear Redeemer, dying Lamb," are still widely sung. Cennick is said to have preached before coming to Kingswood; and he cer-

tainly spoke publicly several times in the autumn of 1739, with the approval of Wesley. Perhaps his position as teacher was thought to give some warrant for his more public exhortations; at all events, Wesley seemed to think Cennick's action afforded no precedent for the next case of lay preaching. Thomas Maxfield, whose conversion had been attended by such striking physical excitement,[1] had gone from Bristol to London as the companion or servant of Charles Wesley. One day early in 1740, word came to Bristol that Thomas Maxfield had been preaching before the Foundery Society. Wesley in alarm hurried up to London to stop such presumption. But his mother — who had recently taken up residence in a room of the Foundery building — met him with a protest, "John, take heed what you do with reference to that young man, for he is as surely called to preach as you are." Admonished by this counsel from one whose caution on all churchly matters he knew to be quite equal to his own, Wesley reluctantly consented to hear Maxfield preach. After listening he exclaimed: "It is the Lord's doing; let him do what seemeth him good. What am I that I should withstand God?" Convinced, in spite of deep-rooted disinclination, he sanctioned Maxfield as a lay preacher. Within a year there were twenty lay preachers.

Of course this innovation met with the warmest opposition, especially from the authorities of the Church. The Archbishop of Armagh said to Charles Wesley some years later, "I knew your brother well; I could never credit all I heard respecting him and you; but one thing in your conduct I could never account for —

[1] See p. 87.

your employing laymen." "My Lord," said Charles, "the fault is yours and your brethren's." "How so?" asked the Archbishop. "Because you hold your peace, and the stones cry out." "But I am told," urged the primate, "that they are unlearned men." "Some are," said Charles, and added with ready wit, "and so the dumb ass rebukes the prophet." Both John and Charles Wesley were always very sensitive to the charge that in sanctioning this class of helpers they had violated the laws of the Church. To touch that point, John avowed, was to touch the apple of his eye. He persistently, and no doubt justly, claimed that there was nothing in the constitution of the Established Church to forbid such lay preaching; he would never consent that the preachers should call themselves ministers, administer the sacraments, or assume any priestly functions. "They no more take upon themselves to be priests than kings," he said. At first it was understood that they were to be employed only in cases of necessity when the services of a clergyman were not to be had. But the principle once yielded, the need of such helpers was soon urgent. With their assistance, the work of Wesley, thus far mostly confined to London and Bristol and vicinity, could now be spread rapidly over the island. Wesley's itinerant career was about to begin.

But just as Wesley's plans for a wider extension of his work were taking definite shape, a theological difference alienated for a time his friend and colleague Whitefield, and caused a division in the forces of Methodism which, unfortunately, was to be permanent. So long as Wesley and Whitefield were intent almost wholly upon the effort to induce men to turn

from sin to righteousness of life, there was little danger that their harmony of purpose should be disturbed by any difference on points of dogma. But when, at the next stage of the work, it became necessary to instruct their converts, any marked divergence of opinion on doctrines they deemed essential was sure to show itself. The two men, it soon became evident, had taken up opposite positions upon that unsolved and insoluble question of the relation of the Divine Will to human destiny. Whitefield had always inclined to that view of this question which is identified with the name of Calvin; and this inclination had been much strengthened by his visits to America. He had made the acquaintance of Jonathan Edwards and most of the other eminent divines in the colonies. He was in New England during the "Great Awakening" of 1739–1741, and was deeply impressed by the type of religious life and thought he saw there. Before his return to England in the summer of 1741, he had adopted in its most positive form the doctrine of election. Wesley, on the other hand, even in his undergraduate days, had wrestled with the problem and reached an exactly opposite conclusion. As he said in a letter to his mother, as early as 1725: "An everlasting purpose of God to deliver some from damnation does, I suppose, exclude from that deliverance all who are not chosen. And if it was inevitably decreed from eternity that such a determinate part of mankind should be saved, and none beside them, a vast majority of the world were only born to eternal death, without so much as a possibility of avoiding it. How is this consistent with either the Divine justice or mercy?"

His work as an evangelist had greatly strengthened that conclusion. It seemed to him impossible to present to men a Gospel which it had been divinely determined most of them could not accept, — a mockery to proclaim the justice, much more the love, of a God who had eternally decreed that a majority of his creatures should sin and be punished therefor. Whitefield, on his side, deemed it an insult to the sovereignty of God to declare that he had provided a plan for the salvation of all men which had proved a failure; to admit that the Divine Will was balked and defeated by man's disobedience. To say that men would not accept the salvation God willed them to receive, was more disrespectful to the Divine Majesty than to say they could not. If God willed all men to be saved, why, then, he urged upon Wesley, all men must be saved, or God's plan be frustrate. Moreover, the doctrine of election, so far from causing in the believer, as Wesley said it must, a kind of pride in the divine favoritism, is a cause of deepest humility. For he is saved precisely *not* because he is better than his fellow-men, not because he has done anything to merit or earn his salvation which they might have done if they would; he is saved because of "free, distinguishing grace." In short, each man saw his own side of the argument, and could not see the other. They could not agree that in this, as in every other of the great vexed questions of the ages, there is truth on both sides, — truths that could only be reconciled if our little wisdom could penetrate to the Counsels of Omniscience.

It may seem singular that in this controversy, Wesley, the logician, should hold by experience and the

moral instincts, while Whitefield, the impassioned orator, should be with the logicians. But Wesley viewed this and every other question from the standpoint of human need. In this world of sin and sorrow, he was not anxious to prove a theodicy; he was anxious to help mankind. He was a logician, but he was first of all an evangelist; and the evangelist, though he may think like a Calvinist in his study, must preach like an Arminian in the fields and the streets.

Into the details of the controversy we need not enter at length. Wesley had been so careful to avoid all occasion of dispute, that a member of the London Society who was an ardent believer in predestination accused him of not preaching the whole truth because he never mentioned that doctrine in his sermons. Thus challenged, Wesley thought it best to declare himself publicly, and in the summer of 1739 preached a sermon on "Free Grace." Whitefield, just then setting out for America, besought him not to publish it; but Wesley, helped to a decision, it is said, by casting a lot which said "Preach and print," decided he must, and printed the sermon. A copy was sent to Whitefield in Savannah, and called out from him immediately a long letter of eager protest and expostulation, followed in the next few months by three or four others in the same strain. He is "ten thousand times more convinced of the truth of election" than when he was in England, but he deprecates all dispute; he "would rather die than see a division" between Wesley and himself, yet "how can I avoid it," he cries, "if you go about, as your brother Charles once said, to drive John Calvin out of Bristol?" To all

which Wesley replied in calmer tone that there were bigots for predestination and bigots against it, and that Whitefield and he must be content, for a time, to hold different opinions on that subject. But Whitefield's temper, as seen in his later letters, was growing less conciliatory, and on the voyage home he prepared a reply which he printed immediately on his arrival, in March, 1741, — in spite of the advice of Charles Wesley, "Put up again thy sword in its sheath." The pamphlet contained little argument; but it made the controversy personal, and embittered it by introducing some charges against Wesley which had nothing to do with the matter in debate. A fortnight later the two friends had an interview. Wesley met Whitefield's impetuous protests by stating, in his usual calm and methodical fashion, his own grievances. The pamphlet, he said, need not have been printed; but if printed, it certainly should not have introduced his name, still less should it have contained such irrelevant and injurious personal matter as must make some breach in their friendship inevitable. The period of estrangement that followed was not, indeed, of long duration. Six months afterward, Whitefield, with his warm-hearted frankness, asked pardon of Wesley for the ill-judged personal references in his pamphlet, and their correspondence was renewed. But there was never again quite the old confidence between them; and their work hereafter was to be done mostly in separation.

The schism in the Methodist societies had already begun before Whitefield's return. John Cennick, the young Kingswood schoolmaster, had accepted Calvinistic views, and in the later months of 1740

was spreading dissatisfaction among the members of the Bristol Society at what he chose to think the dangerous teaching of the Wesleys. With a droll self-importance he wrote to Whitefield complaining that Charles and John Wesley were preaching like atheists against predestination among the frightened sheep, and he alone, in the midst of this plague, sat solitary like Eli, wondering what would become of the ark. On going to Bristol, Wesley found that all sorts of rumors had been set afloat concerning himself and his brother. He expostulated with Cennick for thus accusing them behind their backs, and fomenting trouble in the society. Cennick, however, denied that he had made any private accusations against Wesley and, on being confronted with his letter to Whitefield, protested before the society, with characteristic assurance, that there was nothing but truth in the letter, and that he had no wish to retract it. Wesley waited a week for the offenders to change their attitude, and then at a meeting of the society read a paper declaring that, unless they should openly confess their faults, "several members" would be dropped, "not for their opinions, nor for any of them (whether they be right or wrong), but for scoffing at the word and ministers of God, tale-bearing, backbiting and evil speaking; for their dissembling, lying, and slandering." Cennick was hardly likely to plead guilty to such charges as these, and a few days afterwards he withdrew from the society, with fifty-one others, protesting to the last that he was a martyr for the doctrine of predestination. He was doubtless sincere; but he was rather pragmatic and disputatious, and sometimes mistook his obstinacy for his

duty. The action of Wesley in the circumstances, though severe, was just, and certainly was wise. The usefulness of the society would have been destroyed at once, if it had fallen into factions and lost confidence in its leader.

Wesley was careful to affirm, and with perfect truth, that none were expelled from his societies for their opinions; yet it was but natural that, for the future, those who held to the views of Whitefield should ally themselves with him. As Wesley put it, "There were now two sorts of Methodists: those for particular, and those for universal redemption." If he lost thereby many adherents, those who remained were more closely united in sympathy with him and each other, and his work in the next twenty years gained greatly from such union, in effectiveness and consistency.

Thus, by the summer of 1742, Wesley found himself at the head of a definite religious movement, with a large body of devoted followers, organized in a simple but most efficient manner which kept them under his constant supervision, and with an increasing number of loyal helpers selected by himself and under his direction. And all this as a result of no ambitious plans of his own, but rather of a series of events which he could not deem other than providential.

CHAPTER V

THE EXTENSION OF THE WORK

1742–1760

Up to the year 1742 Wesley's work had been confined mostly to the vicinity of London and Bristol. He had preached in Windsor, Bath, Southampton, and various other places in the south of England, but he had not yet visited the north. He was now to spread the influence of Methodism rapidly in that direction. Within the next ten years his societies were dotted thickly over all the northern counties.

One of his earliest lay preachers was John Nelson, a Yorkshire stone-mason who was converted while working at his trade in London. Nelson was a big, good-natured giant, full of good sense as well as of religion, and being withal an excellent stone-mason, when he went home to Yorkshire, he gave his fellow-villagers in Birstall a good notion of Methodism, and soon gathered a little society there. It was at the invitation of Nelson that Wesley, in May, 1742, started for the north. He stopped on the way at Donnington Park, the seat of the Countess of Huntingdon, to see an old friend, Miss Cowper, then in her last illness, and reached Birstall on a Wednesday evening. That night he had a long conference with Nelson and next day preached twice to his people, meeting

many of them for individual counsel. On Friday he pushed on to Newcastle, — reading Xenophon's "Memorabilia" as he went, — reaching there in the late afternoon. As he rode into the town he was shocked at the wretchedness and vice that filled the streets. So much drunkenness, cursing, and swearing even from the mouths of little children he had never heard before in so short a time. Here evidently was a place that needed him. At seven o'clock Sunday morning he walked to the meanest part of the town, and, standing with his servant John Taylor at the end of a street, began to sing the Hundredth Psalm. Three or four people lounged out to see what was going on, and as the crowd soon grew to as many hundreds, Wesley began to preach; before he was through, there were twelve or fifteen hundred. At the close of his sermon, as they stood gaping in blank astonishment, he said: "If you desire to know who I am, my name is John Wesley. At five in the evening, with God's help, I design to preach here again." That evening the audience must have been ten times as large as in the morning, for Wesley — who had preached to great crowds — declares that he had never seen so many people together, and that, though his voice was strong and full, he could not make the half of them hear. He preached to them on the text, "I will heal their backslidings, I will love them freely;" and when he was through the poor people crowded upon him with expressions of joy and gratitude till he was "almost trodden under foot out of pure love and kindness." He escaped to his inn by a side street, but numbers of them were there before him, beseeching him not to leave them, or at least to stay

a few days more. He was obliged to deny them, as he had promised to be back with Nelson again on Tuesday; but that Sunday convinced him that Newcastle must be a centre of his work in the future. Four months later Charles Wesley came down to Newcastle for a time, and in the late autumn John himself returned and spent six weeks there. Nowhere had the results of his preaching been more encouraging. The people flocked to hear him, and there was little or none of the riotous opposition he often had to encounter elsewhere. Some instances of the physical prostration that had accompanied his first preaching in Bristol are mentioned in the Journal; but in general there was remarkably little unhealthy excitement of any kind. As Wesley himself phrases it, "I never saw a work of God so evenly and gradually carried on."

Among the most interesting entries in the Journal at this time are those which record his visits to the small mining towns in the vicinity of Newcastle, Chowden, Pelton, Burtley, Placey. The poor colliers of this northern region were, if possible, more ignorant and lawless than those at Kingswood had been. Placey had a bad preëminence. Its inhabitants were all colliers, knowing nothing of any kind of religion, and the despair and dread of all decent persons. Sunday was their weekly festival, when men, women, and children turned out to dance, play at ball or chuck-farthing, cursing, swearing, fighting, in an orgy of drunken hilarity. Yet when Wesley rode out one day, in the teeth of a blinding storm of sleet, and preached to these people morning and afternoon, they listened attentively, and in the next four days many of them began a different life. Years

after Wesley said with a touch of fond pride that his honest, simple-hearted colliers of Placey were a pattern to all his societies. He nowhere found more earnest or consistent Christians than many of these "wild, staring, loving" folk of the north; but they were very unconventional. One afternoon while he was preaching in Pelton, an old collier, unaccustomed to hear such good things, in the middle of the sermon began shouting amain, "for mere satisfaction and joy of heart." Their usual mode of expressing approval was by slapping Wesley on the back, which, he says, "somewhat surprised me at first."

Wesley was deeply moved by the poverty and wretchedness of the lowest classes throughout this mining region. One day as he was going to preach on a common near Chowden, twenty or thirty children ran about him, staring like some dumb, hungry animals. They were only just not naked. The eldest, a girl of fifteen, had only a piece of ragged blanket hung upon her, and a dirty cap on her head. "My heart was greatly enlarged toward them," says Wesley; "they looked as if they would have swallowed me up." He could never see poverty like this without making efforts to relieve it, and his religion was always blossoming into wise plans of practical benevolence. Before leaving Newcastle, on this his second visit, he had contracted for the erection of a large building that should provide an orphanage and school for destitute children, and serve as a centre for the charitable as well as the religious work of Methodism in this section. An ex-mayor of Newcastle offered him a plot of ground for forty pounds, and Wesley, with only twenty-seven shillings on hand,

laid the corner-stone, in full assurance that the seven hundred pounds needed would be provided. And they were. A handsome beginning was made a fortnight later by a generous Quaker who wrote that, having seen in a dream Wesley surrounded by a large flock of sheep that he didn't know what to do with, he sent a check for a hundred pounds to help house them. The building was finished within a year, and from that day to this the Newcastle Orphanage has been one of the most useful institutions of English Methodism.

When returning from his first visit to Newcastle, Wesley stopped at Epworth. The place must have seemed to him desolate. His father had been dead seven years, and no representative of the scattered family was living near except his brother-in-law, John Whitelamb, who was now rector of the little parish of Wroote, where, years before, Wesley had served as his father's curate. The stout old rector of Epworth had not been followed by the "Mighty Nimrod" whose succession to the living he so much dreaded; but the curate, a Mr. Romley, was no friend to the Methodists. Wesley reached Epworth on Saturday evening, and not knowing whether there were any left in the parish who would not be ashamed of his acquaintance, took lodging in the village inn. But a servant of his father's, with two or three other old women, found him out at once. To Wesley's question whether there were now in Epworth any intent to lead a religious life, she answered promptly: "I am, by the grace of God, and I know that I am saved through faith. And many here can say the same thing." It seems clear, indeed, that Wesley found

in Epworth and the surrounding villages, little groups of people whose religion was in marked contrast with the spiritual apathy of their neighbors. He records with quiet satisfaction a call he made, three days later, upon a justice of the peace in a village a few miles away, before whom a wagon load of these "new heretics" had lately been arraigned. "But what have they done?" asked the justice of their accusers. "Why, they pretend to be better than other people, and, besides, they pray from morning till night." "But have they done nothing besides?" "Yes, sir," said an old man, "an't please your worship, they have *convarted* my wife. Till she went among them she had such a tongue! And now she is quiet as a lamb." "Carry them back, carry them back," said the justice, "and let them convert every scold in the town!"

But the Methodists were generally not in favor with either the squires or the parsons. The morning after his arrival, Wesley courteously offered to assist in the church service either by preaching or reading the prayers; but the curate gave him a blunt refusal, and improved the occasion by preaching a flaming sermon himself, that afternoon, on the perils of enthusiasm. At the close of the service, John Taylor, standing by the church door, announced to the audience, as they came out, that Mr. John Wesley, not being allowed to speak in the church, designed to preach in the churchyard at six that evening. At that hour a large company gathered, drawn partly, no doubt, by curiosity, but partly also, we may believe, by loving memory of their old rector, to hear his son who was so widely known as a Methodist. Standing on his father's tombstone, by a corner of the church,

Wesley preached to them from one of his favorite texts. "The Kingdom of Heaven is not meat and drink, but righteousness and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost." When he closed, so many of his hearers urged him to stay longer, that he reversed his decision to go on the next morning, and remained a week. Every day he preached and exhorted in the villages near by; every evening he preached in the Epworth churchyard, and there were scenes of such Methodist enthusiasm as doubtless scandalized the curate. One evening a gentleman in the neighborhood, who had not been inside a church for more than thirty years, drew up in his carriage with his wife, and alighting stood in the fringe of the crowd during all the preaching, motionless as a statue. Noticing him, Wesley said abruptly, "Sir, are you a sinner?" "Sinner enough!" said the man, with a choking voice, and stood still staring upwards, till his wife and servants got him into his carriage and carried him home. Ten years later, Wesley met him again, a happy old man, awaiting "without a doubt or fear" the welcome time of his departure.

Whitelamb, a rather feeble, placid little man who had married Wesley's deformed and crippled sister Mary, after her death fell into a state of religious indifference which had alienated him from the Wesleys. He heard Wesley, and now wrote a touching letter, full of a regard that was almost veneration, urging his brother to visit him in his loneliness. Wesley accepted the invitation, and next Sunday preached morning and evening in the little church at Wroote, hastening back in the evening to his last service in the Epworth churchyard. A vast throng from all

the region crowded the churchyard to hear his parting words, and when the three hours were over, said Wesley, "We hardly knew how to part." These twilight sermons in the Epworth churchyard brought back to him with thrilling vividness, as they must to many of his listeners, memories of the long and patient ministry of the father whose dust reposed beneath his feet. As he was leaving next day he wrote in the Journal: "O let none think his labor of love is lost because the fruit does not immediately appear! Near forty years did my father labor here; but he saw little fruit of all his labor."

It is pleasant to think that Wesley's mother lived long enough to hear of this visit of her favorite son to the old home where she too had labored for forty years, in hardships and privations that would have worn out a weaker woman, sharing every trial of her heroic husband with a patience and fortitude quite the equal of his own. Wesley had been in Bristol only a fortnight after his return from the north, when he learned that his mother was seriously ill at her rooms in the Foundery. He hastened up to London, reaching there in time to be with her during the last three days of her life. Charles was absent in the north, but the five surviving daughters, who now lived in or near London, could all be with her in the closing hours. When the peaceful end came, John and his sisters, standing around her bedside, fulfilled the request of her last words, "Children, when I am released, sing a hymn of praise to God." It was July 23, 1742. She was buried, not in a churchyard, but in that "Necropolis of Dissenters," Bunhill Fields. John Wesley, standing by her grave, a vast company

gathered round, pronounced with broken voice the words, "I commit the body of my mother to the earth," and then preached to what he calls "one of the most solemn assemblies I ever saw, or expect to see on this side eternity."

With his visit to Newcastle begins Wesley's itinerant life. Thereafter it becomes difficult to follow him. We shall not try to do so. He had no abiding place. Rooms were set apart for him in the Foundery, but he seldom occupied them more than a few days at a time. He is always on the road, passing from one end of the island to the other. The record of these years, given in the Journal, considered merely as labor of body and mind is astonishing. It is estimated that in the last fifty years of his life he crossed the Irish Channel over fifty times and travelled over two hundred and fifty thousand miles on land — the equivalent of ten times round the globe — visiting remote fishing villages in Cornwall and mining towns in Yorkshire which the railways have not even yet reached. And all his journeying up to 1773 was done on horseback. No man knew the roads and lanes of England half so well as he. Indeed, when he began his travels, there were no turnpike roads in the north of England, and the London coach went only as far as York. His Journal records more than one instance of a journey of eighty or ninety miles on horseback in one day. Later, when he travelled by post-chaise, he sometimes covered even longer distances. In 1778, he left Congleton one Wednesday afternoon for a brief visit to Bristol, stayed in the latter town two hours and was back in Congleton again on Friday afternoon — two

hundred and eighty miles in forty-eight hours — "and no more tired (blessed be God) than when I left." On the other hand, the wretched roads, even in the latter part of the century, especially in the fen country, often made travelling by carriage almost impossible. The Journal reports divers accidents from that cause — an axle breaks, a wheel comes off, his chaise sticks fast in a slough or a snow bank, or is nearly swamped in a stream, and on one occasion he is forced to leave it altogether and take to a boat. In his riding he met numerous accidents that might have easily been fatal; but he always escaped without serious injury, and often improved the opportunity of doing good to some one else. Riding out of London one morning, the saddle slipped to his mare's neck, and he fell over her head to the ground, while she ran back to Smithfield. Some boys caught her and led her to him, and bystanders helped him fix his saddle, cursing and swearing at every word. "I looked to one and another," says Wesley, "and spoke in love. They all took it well and thanked me much; and I gave them some little books which they promised to read carefully." At another time when his horse threw him heavily and the people ran from a cottage to help him, thinking his leg was broken, Wesley found that they were members of his society who had gone astray, and took the occasion to give them kindly persuasion and advice that brought them back again. Once, while he was riding in Bristol, his horse "suddenly pitched on her head and rolled over and over"; but Wesley got only a little bruise from which he felt no pain, and in the next hour preached "to six or seven thousand people." One

of his biographers[1] says that he was "a hard, but unskilful rider." But if the distances he had to travel made him a hard rider, he was merciful to his beast, and insisted that others should be. One of the directions given to his lay preachers was: "Every one ought, 1. Not to ride hard. 2. To see with his own eyes his horse rubbed, fed, and bedded." As to his skill as a horseman, any ungracefulness in his seat was doubtless accounted for by the fact that he always had a book in his hand. His saddle was his study; most of his wide miscellaneous reading was done on horseback. Indeed, there seemed no other time to do it. He always rose at four in the morning; preached whenever possible at five, and was often on the road again before eight, following his morning sermon sometimes by five others in the same day, riding ten or twelve miles between each one and the next. In the fifty years of his itinerant life, he preached over forty thousand times, an average of some fifteen sermons a week. It is doubtful whether the annals of the century can show another record of such tireless methodical activity.

In 1743 Wesley was just forty years of age, in the early maturity of all his powers. Some symptoms of constitutional weakness in his college days had been followed by twenty years of almost perfect health. The sensational account he gives of his symptoms during a few days of fever and indigestion in 1741 is proof enough that he was generally a stranger to pain. His enormous power of work was due, not merely to his strict methodical habits, but still more to a tem-

[1] Hampson, "Life of Wesley," III, 191, quoted by Telford, 195.

perament remarkably steady and self-possessed. He never hurried; he never worried. He had no wearing anxieties. On his eighty-fifth birthday he writes in his Journal that he has never lost a night's sleep, sick or well, on land or sea, since he was born; though here his memory slipped slightly, as was natural at eighty-five, for fifteen years before he notes that while crossing the English channel he has lain awake all night for the first time in his life. The correct record seems to be one night in eighty-five years. He was agile, short and slight of figure, a little man never weighing over about a hundred and twenty pounds. In defiance of the fashion of that bewigged age, he wore his own hair, long, parted in the middle, and falling upon his shoulders with just the suspicion of a curl. His countenance betokened a singular union of firmness and benignity; and many of his contemporaries speak of the keen and searching expression of his eyes, which he retained to old age. A recent noble commemorative poem[1] begins with the lines: —

> "In those clear, piercing, piteous eyes behold
> The very soul that over England flamed."

In manner he was a pattern of courteous dignity; dress, bearing, the very tone of his voice, bespoke a certain austere refinement.

As a preacher, if he is measured either by the immediate effects or by the permanent results of his sermons, it must be said that he had no equal in his century. Yet the effect of his preaching is somewhat difficult to explain, unless we explain it, as he himself did, by the truth of what he said, and the divine enforce-

[1] By Richard Watson Gilder.

JOHN WESLEY.

From the painting by Williams, photographed at Didsbury College, Didsbury, England, by permission of the Rev. J. S. Simon.

ment of that truth upon his hearers. For his sermons certainly owed nothing to the exterior graces of the rhetorician or the orator. He had none of Whitefield's dramatic power. Nor did he covet it. He used to speak with just a little contempt of what he called "the amorous style of praying and the luscious style of preaching," which that great pulpit orator allowed himself. Later in life he wrote, "I cannot admire the French oratory. I despise it from my heart. Give me the plain nervous style of Dr. South, Dr. Bates, and Mr. John Howe. Let who will admire the French frippery. I am for plain sound English." The matter of his sermons, if we may judge from those he printed, was absolutely simple, and the manner rather expository and argumentative than emotional. Dr. Kennicott, then an undergraduate, heard him preach in Oxford in 1744, and describes him as "neither tall nor fat, for the latter would ill become a Methodist. His black hair, quite smooth and parted very exactly, added to a peculiar composure in his countenance, showed him to be an uncommon man. His prayer was soft, short, and conformable to the rules of the University. His text was Acts iv, 3. He spoke it very slowly, and with an agreeable emphasis." Young Kennicott thought Wesley oversevere on the morals of the University, but concludes, "Had these censures been moderated, I think his discourse as to style and delivery would have been universally pleasing to others as well as to myself. He is allowed to be a man of great parts."

His sermons delivered in the open air must have been largely extemporaneous, and doubtless were less carefully prepared than those he printed. Yet here,

as in the pulpit, he was always fearful of any extravagances of statement, and especially of anything strained or fulsome in manner. "Don't scream, Sammy," he wrote to one of his young preachers, "never scream." Whether preaching in St. Mary's at Oxford, or under the open sky in the vast natural amphitheatre at Gwennap in Cornwall, he was always the same quiet, refined, but plain-speaking man. His power over vast audiences seemed to lie in his intense but quiet earnestness, and his intimate and sympathetic knowledge of the needs of his hearers. Said John Nelson, when first he heard him: "He made my heart beat like the pendulum of a clock. I thought he spoke to no one but to me. This man can tell the secrets of my heart!" It is significant that while Wesley was subjected to almost all other sorts of abuse, his preaching was never charged with hypocritical extravagance, or caricatured as that of Whitefield constantly was.

Nor is it true, as sometimes alleged by historians of that century,[1] that the preaching of Wesley and his followers owed its effect to the crude but vivid presentation, before ignorant and vicious men, of the tortures of future punishment. Of Wesley, at least, nothing could be more false. It is clear from his Journal that he rarely, if ever, appealed to terror. The nature of his sermons can be readily inferred from his favorite texts. Those from which he preached most frequently were the following: —

"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me because he hath appointed me to preach the Gospel to the poor."

[1] *e.g.* Leslie Stephen's "History of English Thought in the Eighteenth Century," Ch. XIX, Sect. 6.

"I will heal all their backslidings. I will love them freely." "The Son of Man is come to save that which was lost." "We love Him because He first loved us." "Being justified by faith we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." "I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." "Ho every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters." "The Kingdom of God is not meat and drink, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost." "The Son of Man hath power on earth to forgive sins."

On all these texts, as may be seen in the Journal, he preached repeatedly; while there is hardly to be found a single instance of a sermon not based upon some passage which, like these, states some provision or promise of the Gospel. It is evident that if Wesley led those tradesmen and colliers and smugglers to feel that they were sinners and needed somehow to get rid of their sin, he did it not by threats, seldom even by warnings. He preached, rather, the love of God to man, because his own heart was filled with a great love and pity for his sinning and suffering fellows. Whenever possible he tried to follow his preaching by familiar and kindly advice to his individual hearers. He used to say he could never understand how any minister could be content unless he knew all his flock by name, not excepting the servants. That was impossible with his vast flock; but it is safe to say that he was personally acquainted with thousands of his converts all over England. By 1770 no man in Europe knew so many of his fellow-men by name, or had left the charm of his smile and voice in so many hearts. And the temper of his preaching is

proved clearly enough by the fact that when he died he was doubtless the best beloved man in England.

During the year 1742 and 1743 Wesley made five journeys to the north with Newcastle as his objective point, and in the opposite direction went down into Cornwall quite to Land's End, with a run over to the Scilly Islands. In these journeys with one or two short trips to Wales, he records in the Journal preaching in over seventy towns and villages, in many of them more than once. Methodist societies had now been gathered in so many places, that Wesley felt it wise to call others to his aid, and to form some plan of methodical visitation and oversight. Accordingly he requested several clergymen in sympathy with his work to meet his brother Charles and himself, with a few of the lay helpers, in order to "confer" with reference to the advancement and direction of the work now spreading so rapidly over the island. This first Methodist Conference met in the Foundery, the last five days of June, 1744. Besides the Wesleys there were only four clergymen present, and these from obscure and widely separated parishes — Piers, Vicar of Bexley, Hodges, rector of Wenvo in Wales, Taylor, vicar of Quinton in Gloucestershire, and Meriton from the Isle of Man. Four lay preachers were invited, Richards, Maxfield, Bennett, and Downes. Wesley probably had then no definite plan for future meetings of this sort; but this proved to be the first of a series of Annual Conferences which have continued to this day, and have determined largely the doctrine and polity of Methodism. Considerable time was spent in this, as in

following Conferences, in the discussion of points of doctrine and experience. These discussions were carried on with the most admirable frankness and openness of mind. Every one was to speak his own judgment freely. The Conference of 1747, three years later, entered upon its records the following minute:—

"In our first Conference it was agreed to examine every point from the foundation. Have we not been somewhat fearful in doing this? What were we afraid of? Of overturning our first principles? Whoever was afraid of that, it was a vain fear. For if they are true, they will bear the strictest examination. If they are false, the sooner they are overturned the better. Let us all pray for a willingness to receive light."

Where can be found a better statement of the genuinely liberal attitude toward all truth than this declaration of the little company of early Methodists? The conclusions of successive Conferences were not always entirely consistent with each other; but the result of such deliberations in the course of a few years was the progressive elaboration of a body of practical divinity, clearly stated and attested by experience, that might serve as a sufficient creed of Methodism.

But the attention of this first Conference was occupied chiefly with questions of discipline and practice, especially with the status and work of the lay preachers. Of these there were now above forty. Wesley, with the approval of the other members of the Conference, drew up a set of twelve rules for their guidance, which, slightly changed in phrase, remained in force all his life. Some of these are excellent max-

ims for general application; others were framed with special reference to the dangers and temptations to which Wesley knew these humble men would be exposed. The following examples may serve as specimens of both kinds: —

"4. Believe evil of no one. If you see it done, well; else take heed how you credit it. Put the best construction on everything. You know the judge is always supposed to be on the prisoner's side."

"5. Speak evil of no one: else your word especially would eat as doth a canker. Keep your thoughts within your own breast till you come to the person concerned."

"6. Tell every one what you think wrong in him, and that plainly, and as soon as may be, else it will fester in your heart. Make all haste, therefore, to cast the fire out of your bosom."

"7. Do nothing as a gentleman: you have no more to do with that character than with that of a dancing-master. You are the servant of all, therefore

"8. Be ashamed of nothing but sin: not of fetching wood or drawing water, if time permit; not of cleaning your own shoes or your neighbor's."

"12. Act in all things not according to your own will, but as a son in the Gospel. As such, it is your part to employ your time in the manner which we direct: partly in visiting the flock from house to house (the sick in particular); partly in such a course of Reading, Meditation, and Prayer as we advise from time to time. Above all, if you labor with us in our Lord's Vineyard, it is needful you should do that part of the work which we prescribe, and at those times and places which we judge most for his glory."

Three years later the whole of England and Wales was divided into seven circuits, and each lay helper was assigned to a round of places within a circuit. The preacher whose name headed the list of any circuit was called the "assistant" — now termed "Superintendent" — and was given general oversight of the charges within that circuit, reporting at the Annual Conference. As the number of the preachers increased and their work developed, successive Conferences defined their duties in more detail. They were to rise at four in the morning, to preach not more than twice a day, except on Sundays, to avoid carefully anything rude or awkward in gesture and phrase, to stick to the text and not attempt to "allegorize or ramble," to sing no hymns of their own composing. They were always to pay special attention to the instruction of children, to denounce dram drinking and Sabbath breaking, and to use their best endeavors to prevent and punish smuggling and bribery at elections.

Wesley well understood the risks of intrusting to those he himself called "a handful of raw young men, without name, learning, or eminent sense," the virtual cure of souls. It was, he admitted, only to be justified on the plea of necessity. He felt it imperative to exercise on them what, in other circumstances, would have seemed a very exacting supervision. As is seen in the last rule quoted above, they were to be personally responsible to him, to obey his orders, go where he sent them. He selected them with care and required every one to serve as a "local preacher" before he could become an "itinerant." He frequently gathered a number of them who could be spared from their work a

little time and read them lectures on divinity, or discussed with them some work on philosophy or rhetoric. He gave them individual suggestions as to the manner of their preaching, and criticised sharply their faults. He had a scholar's regret for their lack of learning, but he allowed himself to be consoled by the reflection that most of the rural clergy were little better off. "How many of them," he cries, "know any Hebrew? Nay, any Greek? Try them on a paragraph of Plato. Or even see if they can hobble through the Latin of one of Cicero's Letters?" In the truest sense, Wesley denied that his preachers were ignorant men. "In the one thing which they profess to know, they are not ignorant. I trust there is not one of them who is not able to go through such an examination in substantial, practical, experimental divinity as few of our candidates for holy orders even in the University — I speak it with sorrow and shame — are able to do."

Certain it is that most of these comparatively unlettered lay preachers, by their native judgment and force of character, as well as by their devoted piety and tireless labors, amply justified Wesley's trust. Drawn, for the most part, from the humbler class of society, they won the confidence and understood the needs of that class as the regular clergy never could. Stout of heart and of hand, the record of their heroic effort and still more heroic endurance reads like an epic of the people. Specially noble was their patience under physical insult which most of them would have been well able to return in kind. Thomas Olivers, on his big bay horse, — which he used proudly to say had carried him over a hundred thousand miles, — when surrounded by a mob in Yarmouth, pushed his way down

one of the narrow "rows" to a main street, and then, disdaining to put spurs to his horse and fly from the howling crowd, dodging the sticks and stones thrown at him, walked his horse deliberately down the street and made, as he says, a "very orderly retreat." Thomas Walsh, "the apostle of Ireland," whose enthusiastic devotion burned his life out at the age of twenty-eight, when thrown into prison at Bandon by the rector, who was also the magistrate, stood at his grated window and preached to the crowd outside. Alexander Mather, a converted baker, nearly killed by a mob in Boston a year before, had the house pulled down over his head while preaching in Wolverhampton, by a rabble led on by an attorney of the place. Mather made no attempt at resistance, but next day quietly told the attorney he might take his choice between rebuilding the house at his own expense or being tried for his life. The attorney decided to rebuild. Honest John Nelson, hustled by a mob in Nottingham, was taken by a constable for examination before an alderman. "Why can't you stay at home?" asked the alderman; "you see the mob will not suffer you to preach here." "I didn't know this town was governed by the mob," replied Nelson; "most towns are governed by the magistrates." "Don't preach here," snapped the alderman, as Nelson went on to remind him of the morals of the city. "But God opened my mouth," said John, in telling the story to Wesley, "and I did not cease to set life and death before him," until at last the alderman, not knowing what to do with him, directed the constable to see him safely back to his house. "This," adds Nelson, "seemed a great mortification to the constable, but he was obliged to do it." Another time he did not escape from his

persecutors so easily. A big brute who had vowed to kill him, with a rabble of "gentlemen" at his back, set upon Nelson at a place a little outside of York. Stout stone-mason John, who, with his back against a wall and his good hammer in hand, might have punished any half dozen bullies in York, rather than provoke a general mêlée, suffered himself to be beaten into unconsciousness, when the gentlemen, led by the parson's brother, trampled on him "to tread the Holy Ghost out of him," dragged him through a lane by his hair, knocking him down as often as he attempted to rise, and proposed to throw him into a well. At this point, however, a woman passing by protested, calling a number of the "gentlemen" loudly by name. Finding themselves recognized, the ruffians skulked off, and Nelson was taken into a house, and after a night's rest recovered sufficiently to ride away.

Throughout the first decade of Wesley's itinerant work, he and his preachers were constantly assailed by mobs. For six or eight years after 1742, there is hardly a month in which the Journal does not record some violence of that kind. At the very beginning of his outdoor preaching in Bristol and London the rabble had annoyed him; but the magistrates of those cities soon took the matter in hand and protected him from further serious disturbance. Early in 1740, the mayor of Bristol dispersed a mob that was growing formidable, arrested their leaders, and placed them in custody. All attempts to excuse themselves by defaming Wesley he promptly silenced. "What John Wesley is, is nothing to you. I will keep the peace; I will have no rioting in this city." The London magistrates were slower to interfere, and in the course of the year 1741, the Foun-

dery was several times invaded by a brawling crowd, which it took all Wesley's force and tact to quiet. But at the close of that year, Sir John Ganson, chairman of the Middlesex bench, called on Wesley and informed him that, if proper application were made, all the Middlesex justices had been ordered to protect him from the annoyances to which he had been subjected. A few arrests were made, and thereafter there was no trouble from mobs in London. Wherever, indeed, throughout the island, the magistrates were ready to do their duty, Wesley was seldom disturbed; but in most of the provincial towns and the rural villages, the magistrates and too often the rural clergy were in more or less openly avowed sympathy with the rioters. It is a significant fact that from the most lawless and churchless classes Wesley met little but kindness. It was more often the squire and the parson that he had to dread. The wild, half-savage colliers of Kingswood and Newcastle welcomed him gladly; while in scores of country places he was hustled by mobs who knew the parson hated Methodists and was not likely to repress very sternly any measures to drive them out of town.

Sometimes these disturbances were only the rough horse-play of a crowd used to boisterous or cruel sports, drawn together by the unusual spectacle of a field preacher. At Penfield, for example, the rabble brought a bull they had been baiting, and tried to force the animal through the audience and upon the table by which Wesley stood. At Whitechapel they drove cows among the congregation. In other places they blew horns, rang the church bells, sent the town crier to bawl in front of the preacher, or hired fiddlers and ballad sing-

ers to drown his voice. Even in some instances of serious violence, the leaders of the mob apparently had no special animosity to Wesley or his preaching; they were simply spoiling for a fight, it did not much matter with whom, and the presence of the obnoxious Methodists furnished occasion for a tumult at which the magistrates would be likely to wink. In most cases, however, the mobs were evidently malicious, bent on driving out the Methodists, and willing to inflict as much injury as they dared. The coolness of Wesley in such encounters was amazing. His brother Charles, though he schooled himself to meet insult, confessed that he was naturally timid. But John Wesley never knew what fear meant. Danger could not even quicken his pulse. He would have made the coolest of officers in action. Before the angriest mob, the quiet little man never lost his perfect self-possession. He says in the Journal, simply, that he has always found it best to face a mob. A British crowd usually respects a gentleman, and it always admires pluck. Wesley's figure was slight, and his presence not commanding; but his calm self-control, joined with an unruffled courtesy, made him almost invariably master of a crowd. He had a certain stamp of distinction which they instinctively recognized. Meeting one afternoon in Redcliffe Square a noisy throng that threatened rough treatment, after a word or two of greeting, he said, "Friends, let every man do as he pleases, but it is my manner when I speak of the things of God, or when another does, to uncover my head," which he did; and the crowd instantly did the same. "Then," says he, "I exhorted them to repent and believe the Gospel." Whenever possible he tried to single out the leaders of

a disturbance and addressed them personally. At St. Ives, in Cornwall, for instance, as he was preaching in the evening, the mob of the town broke into the room, roaring and striking as if possessed with devils. "I would fain have persuaded our people to stand still," says Wesley, "but the zeal of some and the fear of others had no ears. So that, finding the uproar increasing, I went into the midst and brought the leader of the mob with me up to the desk. I received but one blow on the side of the head; after which we reasoned the case till he grew milder and milder, and at length undertook to quiet his companions." At Plymouth, after talking quarter of an hour and finding the violence of the rabble increasing, he walked down into the thickest of them and took their captain courteously by the hand. The fellow immediately said: "Sir, I will see you safe home. No man shall touch you. Gentlemen, stand back! I will knock down the first man that touches him." "And so," says Wesley, "he walked to my lodgings, and we parted in much love." But the crowd had followed them, and Wesley stayed in the street a half hour and talked with them till they went away, he says, in high good humor. At Bolton a howling crowd, filled with such rage as he had never seen before in any creatures to be called men, followed him full cry to the house where he was to stay, and he had barely time to get inside before the street was thronged from end to end. Just as the stones began to come through the windows, the mob burst in at the door and filled the lower rooms. Wesley came down from his chamber, walked into the thickest of the tumult, called for a chair, and began to talk. In a moment they were still, "ashamed, melted down, and

devoured every word"; and Wesley records in the Journal his thanks for the providence that brought "all the worst drunkards, swearers, Sabbath-breakers, and mere sinners of the place" to hear the Gospel. Not infrequently his coolness brought him odd champions. In a turbulent meeting in London, a big Thames waterman lifted up his brawny front, and squaring himself to the audience called out: "That gentleman says nothing but what is good. *I* say so; and there is not a man here that shall say otherwise!"

In Wesley's accounts of these disturbances there is often a dry humor, all the more effective because quite unconscious. On one occasion when a violent rabble were assaulting the house where he was staying, the ringleader in his zeal had managed to crowd himself into the house just before the doors were shut against his followers, and thus found himself, alone with Wesley, a mark for the stones the mob were pouring in at all the windows. He was hit once in the forehead, and cowering behind Wesley, cried out, "We shall be killed! What shall I do! What shall I do!" "Pray to God," Wesley advised, and adds in telling the story, "He took my advice and began praying as he had never done since he was born." On another occasion, while staying at a little Methodist inn at Holyhead, their meeting was disturbed by a certain Captain G., a "clumsy, overgrown, hard-faced man," whose countenance reminded Wesley of the ruffians in Macbeth he had seen at Drury Lane when a boy at the Charterhouse. Early in the evening, Captain G., with a drunken rabble at his heels, had burst in the door, beaten the landlord and kicked his wife, and blustered about the house in a vain attempt to find Wesley. Later on, he returned more

drunk than ever, but as he came in at the door the landlord's buxom daughter, standing by with a pail of water, drenched him from head to foot. Unused to this element and shocked by such sudden cooling, he stood stock still and shouted "Murder! Murder!" while the landlord quietly slipped behind him and bolted the door. Thus locked in with the minister, the valorous captain turned very humble, but was not allowed to go out until he had pledged his word of honor to make no more disturbance.

The most vicious mobs Wesley had to face were in Cornwall and Staffordshire. When he was in the Cornish town of Falmouth, in the summer of the rebellion year 1745, when the whole country was in hourly terror of invasion, a foolish rumor was spread that he was a papist and emissary of the Pretender. An immense mob surged about the house where he was calling upon an invalid, shouting at the top of their voices: "Bring out the Canorum! Bring out the Canorum!" They forced the outer door, and only a thin partition separated them from the room where Wesley was standing. At that moment he himself thought his life not worth an hour's purchase. A number of burly privateersmen put their shoulders against the inner door and forced it open. As it fell in, Wesley stepped out and calmly said: "Good evening. Here I am. Which of you has anything to say to me? To which of you have I done any wrong? To you? To you? To you?" And so, continuing speaking as he stepped forward, he reached the middle of the street, and then addressing the crowd said, "Neighbors, do you wish to hear me speak?" "Yes, yes," the crowd yelled, "Let him speak; he shall speak; nobody shall hinder

him." A few sentences so far placated the captains of the rabble that they swore nobody should hurt him, and some gentlemen of the place, emboldened by this assurance, ventured to accompany Wesley to his lodging. It was thought unsafe, however, for him to go into the street again, and he was advised to take boat at the rear of the house where he was staying and leave town by water, his horse being sent on to meet him at a landing-place some miles away. Some of the crowd learned of his escape and ran along the shore to intercept him. As he landed, one of the fiercest of them stood to meet him at the head of a steep passage leading up from the water side. Wesley walked straight up to him, and said quietly, "I wish you good night, sir." "I wish you was in hell," growled the bully, while Wesley mounted his horse and rode on to his next preaching place. "I never saw the hand of God so manifest as here," was Wesley's own comment upon his danger and deliverance.

But nowhere were the Methodists subjected to such wanton and malicious outrage, and probably nowhere was Wesley himself in so much peril as in the Staffordshire towns of Darleston, Wednesbury, and Walsal. A Methodist society had been formed in Wednesbury, at first with the approval of the vicar of the parish. But one or two of the Methodists, with what Wesley calls "inexcusable folly," by speaking evil of the vicar and the Church, had turned their sympathy into bitter opposition. The baser class, the cock-fighting, bull-baiting rabble of this black country, needed only this encouragement to begin a determined persecution of the Methodists. In June, 1743, there was a week of almost continuous riot. Nearly every Methodist house

in the three towns had its windows broken out, and in many cases the furniture broken or burned; tradesmen's shops were gutted; men were beaten senseless, and thrown into gutters, their wives and daughters terrified by profane threats of murder, and in some few instances injured by stones or beaten with clubs. When application for protection was made to a magistrate in Walsal, he told the Methodists they were themselves responsible for the disturbances and refused their application. Later on, he was seen among the rioters, swinging his hat and shouting huzzas. The curate of Walsal looked on with approval.

Wesley was in London when he heard of these outrages, and hurried to Staffordshire to do anything in his power to stop them. But another appeal to a magistrate proved as futile as the first, and the Methodists were obliged to give up public preaching in that neighborhood for the remainder of the summer. In October, however, Wesley went down again, and preached one day at noon in the market place without opposition. But an hour or two sufficed to raise the mob. By four o'clock they surrounded the house where he sat writing, and shouted, "Bring out the minister, we will have the minister!" Wesley asked for a parley with their leader and invited him to call in also two of his most angry companions. They came into the house, foaming with rage; but in two minutes Wesley had them quiet as lambs. He then went out with them to the midst of the crowd, and standing on a chair, asked them what they wished of him. "We want you to go with us to the justice," they shouted; and when Wesley expressed his entire readiness to do that, they applauded his pluck, "crying out with might and main,

'He is an honest gentleman, and we will spill our blood in his defence.'" They set out, accordingly, through the rain and the dark — for the night was closing in — for the house of Justice Lane. But this worthy, who a week before had issued a general warrant for the apprehension of any of "those disorderly persons styling themselves Methodist preachers," now found it convenient to be in bed, though the hour was early, and refused to come out. His son, however, appeared at the door, and asked what was the charge against the prisoner. One of the crowd — who were now evidently not very ill natured — replied, "To be plain, sir, if I speak the truth, all the fault I find with him is that he preaches better than the parson." "Nay," said another, "but it is a downright shame; he makes people rise at five in the morning to sing psalms. What advice would your worship give us?" "Go home," said young Lane, "and be quiet." But they were out for a night of it, and decided to take Wesley before a justice in the next town of Walsal. Halfway there, they met a mob from Walsal, and at once improved the opportunity to spill a little blood in defence of their prisoner. Wesley's bodyguard put up a good fight, one woman, as he noticed, knocking down four men; but they were tired and outnumbered, and Wesley became the spoil of Walsal. This second mob dragged him through the streets of their town, yelling "Knock him down! Knock his brains out!" One lusty fellow behind him struck at him several times with a stout oaken club, which, as Wesley says, if it had but once hit on the back of his head, would have saved the crowd further trouble. Another ruffian came rushing through the press, his arm raised to strike, but sud-

denly dropped it and only stroked Wesley's head, saying, "What soft hair he has!" At last Wesley got permission to speak, before they proceeded to extremities, and when, after a few words, they were about to hustle him on again, he began to pray. At this, the captain of the mob, a brawny prize fighter from the bear garden, suddenly turned and said, "Sir, I will spend my life for you. Follow me, and not a soul here shall touch a hair of your head." And thus convoyed, barely escaping cudgels and stones, avoiding a hostile crowd that held a bridge by taking a by-path over a dam, Wesley at last reached his lodgings safely, "having lost only a flap of my waistcoat and a little skin from one of my hands." Through it all, Wesley says, he had the same presence of mind as if he had been in his own study. Only once it came into his thought that if they should throw him into the river it would spoil the papers in his pocket; for himself, he had on a thin coat and light boots and was confident he could swim ashore. Next morning as he rode through the town on his way to Northampton, he met with such cordial expressions of sympathy that he could scarcely believe last night's experiences to be real. As for the big prize fighter who had championed him, five days later he was admitted to the society and was a loyal Methodist for fifty years. When Charles Wesley asked him what he thought of his brother John, "Think of him!" cried he; "I think he is a mon of God, and God was on his side when so many of us couldn't kill one mon."

Certainly it is not superstition to find something supernatural in the religion which enabled these humble Methodists to bear with such patience the indignities to which they were subjected. For these men were

not cowards. Most of them came from that tough English peasant class which, from the days of Robin Hood down, has always been able to give a good account of itself wherever any fighting is to be done. It was admitted that there were no better soldiers in the English army than the Methodists who at Fontenoy went into battle singing Wesley's hymns. Wesley himself always liked a soldier — discipline and energy were in the blood of him; and it was with some pride that he heard a Colonel at Canterbury say he would rather command five hundred Methodists than any regiment in the army. But Wesley knew that any attempt to resist persecution would only expose his people to the charge of disorder and greatly increase their hardships. Had they struck a single blow for themselves, they would have given some color to the false accusations so often made against them and roused popular feeling to frenzy. He advised them to seek the protection of law, whenever possible, but not to resort to violence in retaliation or even in self-defence. It is impossible not to admire and wonder at the self-control of people so well able to defend themselves, and prone by all the instincts and traditions of their class not to take a blow without returning it. Only in the rarest instances was the provocation too great for endurance. One day as Wesley was leaving the preaching place in Norwich with John Hampson, the brawniest of his lay preachers, some ruffians began to threaten them. Wesley urged Hampson to retire, but the preacher answered in his big voice, "You let me alone, sir; if God has not given you an arm to quell this mob, He has given me one, and the first man that molests you here, I will lay him dead!" Sometimes Methodist women did not feel

themselves strictly bound to non-resistance; or, a sympathetic bystander would interfere in behalf of the preacher. As Wesley was preaching in Bawden, an Irish town, a clergyman — a little drunk, Wesley charitably thinks — with a very large stick in his hand began to make disturbance, when two or three resolute women by main strength pulled him through the house into a garden; and as he began to make maudlin love to one of them, she gave him a ringing cuff that brought him to his senses. Another assailant came on in great fury; but the town butcher, not a Methodist, knocked him down as he would an ox. "This," says Wesley, "cooled his courage, and so I quietly finished my discourse."

How shall we account for this widespread and malignant opposition during the years 1740 to 1745? We may, of course, answer this question summarily, as Wesley did, by quoting the words of the Master, "If ye were of the world, the world would love its own; but because ye are not of the world, therefore the world hateth you." And doubtless this is the fundamental and inclusive reason. Sin and righteousness are eternally at odds; and every reformer, unless he be content to effect what Carlyle calls "a heaven and hell amalgamation society," need expect little but opposition from those whom he endeavors to reform. Yet it is possible to discover certain reasons for the special malignity with which the early Methodists were everywhere assailed. The opposition may seem, indeed, wanton and inexplicable. The Methodists were everywhere honest, industrious, orderly, law-abiding folk. The virtues that make good citizens and good neighbors were the indispensable conditions of membership in their societies. Wesley himself, so far from being

an inflammatory orator inciting people to mischievous fanaticism, was an educated gentleman, courteous in manner, judicious and temperate in speech. He urged on his hearers loyalty both to the Church and State. The best friend of the poor, he was active in all philanthropic and charitable work, and especially interested in all that pertained to the welfare of the lower and more unfortunate classes. Such people, led by such a man, it should seem, ought from the first to have won love rather than provoked angry contempt; and it certainly might have been expected that the legal authorities would protect them rather than screen their adversaries.

Doubtless, as has been already said, a good deal of the rioting must be laid to the charge of that turbulent element at the bottom of society which is always ready for any form of rough or brutal excitement. They baited Wesley's preachers as they would bait a bull; not because they had any hatred of the preachers or of the bull, but because they liked the sport. The world is better policed now; but even yet any revolution that breaks the crust of society is liable to disclose an element of sheer brutality; in rural England, at the middle of the eighteenth century, that element was very large, and only a little way below the surface. Moreover this ignorant and brutalized class is always stupidly conservative. They have an obstinate prejudice against any aggressive novelty, and are sure to resent the assumption of superiority implied in any attempt to teach or to reform them. In this case, the inevitable prejudice was increased when members of their own class, in considerable numbers, separated themselves from their old companionship, united themselves in

societies, and professed a new kind of religion better than the parson's or the squire's. Such a prejudice naturally grows into the envy and malice that, in the upper classes, led a man to sneer, in the lower classes to strike. Yet the opposition in the lowest classes would hardly have dared to be violent, had it not been tacitly, and in some cases openly, encouraged by the clergy and the magistrates. Everybody knew that the Church frowned upon the Methodists. Wesley, it is true, urged his people to go to church; but usually without much success. The Church had always neglected them; it was inevitable that they should neglect the Church. The parish clergy, in almost every instance, looked with dislike and suspicion on the irregular societies, with a form of organization unknown to the Establishment, neglecting the ritual, preached to by unschooled rustics who owned allegiance only to an itinerant Fellow of Lincoln College. The very existence of such societies implied that the Church had been remiss in its duty. The Methodists in many instances, in spite of the exhortations of Wesley, probably returned this dislike, and were guilty of serious indiscretions in their language with reference to the clergy of the Church. Refusing to accept the position of dissenters, they seemed to the clergy resolved to remain an element of ignorance and faction within the Church which they condemned. English magistrates, in the first half of the century, at all events in the country and the provincial towns, were pretty sure to think as the clergy thought on all churchly matters, and were almost uniformly at one with them in their dislike of Methodists. From such opinions entertained by their superiors, it is easy to see that the vicious and ignorant

rabble would draw encouragement for any outrages their envy or malice might suggest. The Methodists were practically defenceless. One other cause, peculiar to that time, probably increased, in many instances, the aversion to Methodists. Wesley and his preachers were frequently suspected of being papists; and in those years just before the rebellion of '45, the first suspicion of Romish leanings rendered any man an object of dread and often provoked insult. The Methodists, at first thought, would seem to have resembled Puritans much more nearly than papists; yet there were not wanting some things in their organization and methods that might awaken apprehension in ignorant and prejudiced people. Their societies, if not secret, were private, meeting usually by night in private houses; the class-meeting was understood to be a modification of the Romish confessional. Who were these lay preachers, staying for a short time in a place and then moving quietly on elsewhere? And who was the smooth, courteous cleric to whom they were all said to be personally responsible, and who was constantly passing from one end of the island to the other? It all looked very like some sort of order or brotherhood; and of religious orders and brotherhoods the English people for more than a century had been very mistrustful. In the early months of 1744, when England was expecting immediate invasion, the report was circulated that Wesley had recently been seen with Charles Edward in France; and, absurd as the rumor was, Wesley hesitated to give it color by leaving London just at a time when all Roman Catholics had been ordered out of the city by royal proclamation. In March of that year he prepared a Petition to the King, in the name of

the Methodists, "a people scattered and pestered and trodden under foot," defending them from any aspersions on their loyalty and asserting in unqualified terms their allegiance to the Church and the Crown, and their abhorrence of the doctrines of Rome. He withheld this paper, it is true, but only because his brother Charles urged that it seemed to admit the Methodists to be, in some sort, a sect. Charles Wesley, himself, in one of the Yorkshire open-air services that summer, happened to introduce into his prayer the request that "the Lord would call home his banished" — and found himself immediately summoned before a magistrate on a charge of favoring the Pretender. As the witness failed to appear, the magistrate, after keeping him waiting eight hours, told him there was nothing against him and he might go. "But," said Wesley, "this is not sufficient. It is no trifling matter. Even my life is concerned in this charge." And only when the justice acknowledged in explicit terms that his loyalty was unquestionable, would he take his leave. In fact, both the Wesleys were the stanchest of patriots; but in a time of unusual apprehension, any hints as to the Romish practices or sympathies of the Methodists were naturally caught up by the turbulent populace as a pretext for insult and outrage.

After about 1750 the assaults of mobs grew fewer, and gradually ceased altogether. Many of the class from which the mob were drawn were now themselves members of Wesley's societies, while the general results of the Methodist movement in temperance, honesty, order, and thrift were now so manifest that there was no longer any pretext for popular opposition. As Wesley said, "When the clergy and gentry would no

longer lead or pay the mob, the poor rabble became quiet as lambs." When disturbances now and then occurred, they were promptly quieted by the magistrates, or by those whom Wesley calls his "unawakened hearers," — a class to whose aid in keeping order he often acknowledges his obligations.

But for the vulgar opposition of mobs, Wesley felt, after all, very little concern. From them he expected nothing better. When a boy in his father's rectory he had probably learned a good deal about the temper of the English lower classes, and he knew how to meet it. He was confident, moreover, that the hostility of those classes would cease as they came to appreciate his work, and that he should find among them, as he did, his warmest supporters. But it was a difficult thing to encounter the opposition, always bitter and often contemptuous, of those from whom he had a right to expect sympathy and encouragement, if not active cooperation. For more than a score of years, the Church, blind to her great opportunity, had no sympathy for him, no recognition for his work. Her pulpits were closed to him, her clergy regarded him with suspicion, often with the most outspoken hostility. The latest bibliography of the Wesleyan Movement [1] gives the titles of three hundred and thirty-two Anti-Methodist books and pamphlets published before 1762, and nearly all of them are by Churchmen. Nor was the opposition usually reasoned and temperate. Wesley's temper and motives were wilfully misinterpreted, his work misrepresented, his character vilified. Naturally con-

[1] Anti-Methodist Publications issued during the eighteenth century. By Rev. Richard Green, London, 1902.

servative and order-loving, he was accused of upsetting all reverend traditions and becoming usages; clear-headed, logical, hating enthusiasm, he was accused of spreading an irrational frenzy over the country and turning the heads of the vulgar; the most frugal and the most generous of men, he was accused of preaching the Gospel for gain, and grasping the scanty contributions of the poor; always loyal to his King and his Church, he was accused of being a Jesuit, a papist in disguise, and probably an emissary of the Pretender. And these accusations came not from the ignorant and credulous populace, nor yet from the contemptuous world of fashion and licentiousness; they came from those who should have been his helpers and allies; some of the worst of them came from bishops of his own Church.

His logical habit of thought, strengthened by his long training as Moderator of the classes in Lincoln College, made Wesley a skilful debater; but he had no liking for controversy. He knew that there is no such foe to charity. And he knew that theological controversy is, of all kinds, the most bitter. In his first strictly polemic tract — a reply to Rev. Josiah Tucker of Bristol — he deprecates the temper which usually leads either party to a debate to think that, like a soldier, he must injure his opponent as much as he can; and he avows that he enters into a personal discussion with great fear, not of his adversary, but of his own spirit. In another pamphlet he quotes with approval the saying of an old divine that "God made practical divinity necessary; the devil, controversial." "But," he adds, "it is sometimes necessary; if we do not resist the devil, he will not flee from us." Obviously so. To have remained

silent under the multitude of accusations brought against him during the early years of his wider work would have been a confession of weakness or of error. For mere personal defamation, indeed, he cared little; but he was keenly sensitive to charges, coming from eminent men in his own Church, that impugned his teaching and undermined his influence for good. But it is proof of his Christian courage and Christian self-restraint that in all his controversial writing — with, perhaps, a single very excusable exception — he did not lose his temper, and would not be goaded into bitterness or discourtesy.

Of the multitudes of pamphleteers who had their fling at the Methodists, only four or five were deemed by Wesley of sufficient importance to demand personal reply. The most prominent of his early critics, and the one whose opposition Wesley himself most regretted, was Gibson, Bishop of London. Gibson was a learned and pious man, but timid, conciliatory, and now getting into the seventies. His memory ran back toward the troublous times of the Commonwealth and Restoration, and he was fearful of anything that might again disturb the dignified quiet of the Church. He always contrived to find some *Media via* that would lead him out of controversy, and on all disputed matters was inclined to the opinion of Sir Roger de Coverley, that "much might be said on both sides." When John and Charles Wesley called on him, in 1738, to inquire whether the religious societies were conventicles or not, the bishop, says Charles, "warily referred us to the law." Of course, the interpretation of the law in the case was just the question that the Wesleys wished decided, as Gibson very well knew; but when pressed for a definite an-

swer he refused to commit himself. To the point-blank query, "Are the societies conventicles?" he replied, "I think not; however, you can read the Acts and laws as well as I. I determine nothing." At midsummer of the next year, 1739, just after Wesley had begun his field preaching, and when Whitefield was addressing vast audiences in and near London, the timorous bishop issued a pastoral letter, "By way of caution against Lukewarmness on the one hand and Enthusiasm on the other," — a paper that makes it clear he was getting to be a great deal more afraid of the Enthusiasm than of the Lukewarmness. As the Methodist movement spread over the island the hostility of the bishop became more pronounced. He repeated the caution against enthusiasm in his charge of 1741, and three years later either wrote himself, or at all events sanctioned, an anonymous pamphlet, "Observations on the Conduct and Behavior of a Certain Sect usually distinguished by the name of Methodist." The later parts of this pamphlet are aimed especially at Whitefield, who is severely censured; but in the first part the Methodists in general are denounced as sectaries all the more dangerous because they shield themselves from legal attack within the Church whose discipline and formularies they constantly violate. Thus far Wesley saw no reason for personal reply; but in his published charge of 1747 the bishop made an arraignment of the Methodists which Wesley felt he ought not to leave unanswered. The Methodists, the bishop now declares, are enemies of the Church, "who give shameful disturbance to the parochial clergy, and use very unwarrantable methods to prejudice their people against them, and to seduce their flocks from them," and who

profess and teach "doctrines big with pernicious influence upon practice." Wesley's letter to the Bishop of London, in reply to these accusations, is one of the best specimens of his controversial writing. He does not forget the respect due the bishop and his office; but he defends the doctrine and the practice of the Methodists with a cogent earnestness that rises at the close of the paper to the level of sadly solemn eloquence. A short passage will show both the nature of the argument with which Wesley met the bishop's main accusation, and the temper in which that argument is urged.

"But do we willingly 'annoy the established ministry,' or 'give disturbance to the parochial clergy'? My lord, we do not. We trust herein to have a conscience void of offence. Nor do we designedly 'prejudice people against them.' In this also our heart condemneth us not. But you 'seduce their flocks from them.' No, not even from those who feed themselves, not the flock. All who hear us attend the services of the church, at least as much as they did before. And for this very thing, we are reproached as *bigots to the church*, by those of most other denominations. . . . It is not our care, endeavor, or desire *to proselyte* any from one man to another, or from one church (so called), from one congregation or society to another (we would not move a finger to do this — to make ten thousand such proselytes), but from darkness to light, from Belial to Christ, from the power of Satan to God. . . . I would fain set this point in a clear light. Here are, in and near Moorfields, ten thousand poor souls for whom Christ died rushing headlong into hell. Is Dr. Bulkeley, the parochial minister, both willing and able to stop them? If so, let it be done, and I have no place in these parts. I go and call other sinners to repentance. But if, after all he has done, and all he can do, they are still in the broad way to destruction, let me see if God will put a

word, even in my mouth. . . . Is this any annoyance to the parochial minister? Then what manner of spirit is he of? Does he look on this part of his flock as lost because they are found of the great Shepherd? My lord, great is my boldness toward you. You speak of the *consequences* of our doctrines. You seem well pleased with the success of your endeavors against them, because (you say) they 'have pernicious consequences, are big with pernicious influences upon practice — dangerous to religion and the souls of men.' In answer to all this, I appeal to plain fact. I say once more, What have been the consequences (I would not speak, but dare not refrain) of the doctrines I have preached for nine years past? By the fruits shall ye know those of whom I speak; even the cloud of witnesses who at this hour experience the gospel which I preach to be the power of God unto salvation. The habitual drunkard, that was, is now temperate in all things. The whoremonger now flees fornication. He that stole steals no more, but works with his hands. He that cursed or swore, perhaps at every sentence, has now learned to serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice unto him with reverence. Those formerly enslaved to various habits of sin, are now brought to uniform habits of holiness. These are demonstrable facts. I can name the men, with their places of abode. . . . My lord, the time is short. I am past the noon of life, and my remaining days flee away as a shadow. Your lordship is old and full of days. It cannot, therefore, be long before we shall both drop this house of earth and stand naked before God; no, nor before we shall see the great white throne coming down from heaven and he that sitteth thereon. . . . Will you then rejoice in your success? The Lord God grant it may not be said in that hour, 'These have perished in their iniquity: but their blood I require at thy hands.'"

The next episcopal attack upon the Methodists was of a very different sort, and was answered by

Wesley in a very different manner. George Lavington, Bishop of Exeter, one must judge, had little learning and less piety — an essentially vulgar, boisterous, buffoonish man, whose writing in style and argument was rather below the level of a Grub Street pamphleteer. In 1749 he published in two parts a pamphlet entitled "The Enthusiasm of Methodists and Papists Compared," calculated — if not deliberately intended — to countenance the absurd calumny that Wesley and Whitefield were papists in disguise. Selecting numerous passages from Wesley's Journal wrested from their context, garbled and misinterpreted in various ways, Lavington sets beside them extravagant passages from the lives of the saints to show that the worst instances of Romish fanaticism and superstition are surpassed in the conduct of Wesley and his followers. Seldom has a more scurrilous piece of abuse disgraced the highest office of the Church. Although its authorship was generally known, the pamphlet was anonymous, and Wesley, therefore, did not feel bound to observe in his reply all the deference due a bishop. For once he allows himself some passages that make very interesting reading for the natural man, but are hardly in his usual tone. The bishop's abuse of facts, his bad logic, even his bad grammar, all are mercilessly exposed; while some of his gravest charges Wesley refuses to discuss till this Christian bishop can show "a little heathen honesty" and a little more acquaintance with "those old enthusiasts," the writers of the Old and New Testaments. He closes with an indignant challenge to his critic to drop his mask. "Any scribbler, with a middling share of low wit, not

encumbered with good nature or modesty, may raise a laugh on those whom he cannot confute, and run them down whom he dares not look in the face. By these means, even a comparer of Methodists and Papists may blaspheme the great work of God, not only without blame, but with applause; at least from readers of his own stamp. But it is high time, Sir, you should leave your skulking place. Come out and let us look each other in the face. I have little leisure and less inclination for controversy. Yet I promise, if you will set your name to your third part, I will answer all that shall concern me."

The bishop did not choose to accept this challenge; his "third part," issued as a separate volume, in 1752, is still anonymous. This part is devoted almost entirely to Wesley. Lavington does not attempt any rejoinder to Wesley's "Letter," which, he says, is "a medley of chicanery, sophistry, prevarication, evasion, pertness, conceitedness, scurrility, sauciness, and effrontery" that time and paper would be wasted upon; he contents himself, after this courteous introduction, with bringing together a number of quotations from Wesley's writings — especially from the Journal — to show that the Methodists in general and Wesley in particular are boastful, hypocritical, crafty, and fanatical. The bishop is angry, and his statements are even more ribald and reckless than those of his previous pamphlets. Wesley probably should have passed by the attack in dignified or contemptuous silence; and perhaps he would have done so, had it not been for the promise with which his "Letter" closed. As it was, he felt obliged to the weary task of taking up the bishop's specifications

one by one and exposing their falsity. At the end, he draws a long breath and declares that not a single article of the bishop's charge is true: that not one of his arguments has any force; that the bishop knows they have not, and doesn't himself believe his own conclusions. Southey remarks, truly enough, that Wesley's Letters to Lavington do not show the urbanity that characterizes his other controversial writing; it was hardly possible to be urbane in reply to an opponent who was equally careless of truth and of courtesy, and who treated the most serious subjects, as Wesley said, in the "temper of a merry-andrew." Yet Wesley cherished for Lavington no bitter nor lasting resentment; it is pleasant to read in the Journal for September 29, 1762, after these days of bitter controversy were long past, "I was well pleased to-day to partake of the sacrament with my old opponent, Bishop Lavington. O may we sit down together in the Kingdom of our Father."

Ten years after the Lavington controversy, Wesley was again attacked by a bishop. Warburton, Bishop of Gloucester, the doughty champion of orthodoxy who for twenty years had been swinging his theological cudgel over the heads of all who differed with him, now turned his attention to Wesley. In his treatise on the "Office and Operation of the Holy Spirit" — a subject which this hard-headed, mundane, pugnacious rationalist was not likely to treat with sympathy — he argued that the supernatural operations of the Spirit were no longer to be expected. We now live under the rule of faith. Miracles, once needed to attest a divine revelation, now no longer occur. The belief in them is fanaticism — an evi-

dence of feeble intelligence and disordered imagination. He then turns to Wesley as the best example of this modern fanaticism, and from the sixteen years' experience recorded in the Journal cites a large number of passages to prove that Wesley claimed for himself almost all the miraculous gifts of the apostles. Warburton was always a swash-buckler in controversy, and he had seldom been more hardy and reckless in statement. Before he is through, he accuses Wesley directly and by implication, not only of credulity and enthusiasm, but also of the vanity, vindictiveness, and hypocrisy which are the natural fruits of fanaticism. Yet, at all events, Warburton did not hide behind an anonymous title-page; he often fought, it is evident, for the love of fighting and the pride of championship, but he fought in the open. And his charges, in this case, though false and reckless, were urged seriously; to a bellicose temper like his, they may have seemed fair.

Wesley's "Letter" in reply is temperate and courteous. The reader of to-day will doubtless wish that in this, as in some of his other papers, he had been less fussily careful to discuss every one of the passages cited against him and had confined himself to the larger questions at issue. For his defence was easy. That he was credulous need not be denied — something more must be said of that on a later page. There are certainly many incidents in the Journal that do not demand the supernatural explanation Wesley was inclined to give them; some might well have been omitted. But it is to be remembered that Wesley never imposed his own explanation upon any one else; still less did he ever ascribe any strange phe-

nomena to special gifts of his own, or urge them in proof of the doctrines he taught. The one proof of a divine sanction upon his work he found in that absolute and often sudden change of temper and desire which turned thousands of those to whom he preached from vice to virtue, from a life of sin to a life of righteousness. This, call it conversion, the new birth, or what you will, was an indisputable fact. If it was a miracle, it was such a miracle as had attended the preaching of the Gospel in every age, and a miracle that the Christian Church could never afford to disavow or depreciate.

These Letters to the three bishops, together with two pamphlets in reply to some calm and courteous criticisms from a Rev. Thomas Church of London, are all of Wesley's papers of personal controversy that have much importance. More interesting, however, and more valuable than this purely polemic writing, is the tract issued in 1743, under the title "An Earnest Appeal to Men of Reason and Religion," with a supplement — "A Further Appeal" — which followed in 1745. These two papers, as their title indicates, are a calm, well-reasoned, but vigorous defence of the people called Methodists. Wesley welcomes, nay demands, the decision of reason. He always had to the full the eighteenth-century respect for logic and common-sense. "The reproach of Christ," he wrote once, "I am willing to bear; but not the reproach of enthusiasm — if I can help it." He challenges those who accept the central truths of Christianity to show any point wherein the Methodist teaching is inconsistent with those truths; and he shows that, so far from being fanatical or schis-

matic, it is the Methodists, and not their accusers, who best exemplify the doctrines and obey the rules of the English Church. As to the absurd calumny that he himself was making gain from the movement, he answers that by stating the simple fact that not a penny of the contributions of the Methodists came into his hands, but that, on the contrary, he had himself assumed a debt of some six hundred and fifty pounds to provide them with preaching houses in London and Bristol. "Why," he asks indignantly, "should any man who has all the conveniences and many of the superfluities of life deliberately throw up his ease, most of his friends, his reputation, the way of life of all others most agreeable both to his natural temper and education, toil day and night, spend all his time and strength — to gain a debt of six or seven hundred pounds!" In the "Further Appeal" he makes a most searching but just arraignment of morals and religion in England when he began his work, and then urges that the Methodist movement, in spite of the opposition it encounters, is temperate and rational, and can be productive of nothing but good to individuals or to society. The two tracts, taken together, form the best contemporary vindication of early Methodism; they should be read by all who would understand Wesley's motives and his methods. They are also perhaps the best specimens of his controversial writing; simple in style; vigorous but not bitter; self-controlled and logical, yet aglow with earnest feeling.

Apart from mere personalities and the many statements fabricated in the heat of controversy, the charges urged by the Church against the early Methodists all reduce, in the last analysis, to these two: —

First, violations of ecclesiastical discipline or usage, such as field preaching, lay preaching, the organization within the Church of a network of societies not subject to its control. Second, the insistence upon some "assurance," "inward feeling," "witness," or similar experience as an essential evidence of faith, and the disposition to decry the religion of all who could not profess such experience.

To the first charge Wesley's uniform answer was that his action, for the most part, was not in violation of any canon of the Church; but that if, in some matters, he had disregarded ecclesiastical authority, it was only because he had been forced to decide whether he would obey God rather than man. He had consented to speak in the fields, though with a repugnance that he could never quite overcome; but he had consented only because driven to the alternative of preaching there or not preaching at all. He had reluctantly sanctioned preaching by laymen; but only because the parish clergy were indifferent or hostile and refused their assistance. His societies were only such groups of religious persons as had been formed within the English Communion for more than half a century; and if they tended, against his wishes, to draw away in many cases from the parish church and recognized only their relation to Wesley, it was because of the distrust and often open disavowal they had to meet from the clergy. In a word, all these innovations upon established discipline and usage were the results of the opposition of the Church, and not its primary cause. Conclusive proof of this is to be found in the fact that this opposition had taken pronounced form before Wesley could

have been charged with any irregularities whatever. As we have seen, practically all the pulpits of London were shut against him before the close of 1738, when as yet — to use his own phrase — he would as soon have thought of cutting a throat as of preaching in the fields, and had never dreamed of class-meetings or lay preaching.

Clearly, then, we must find the original ground of the hostility to Wesley and the early Methodists in the second of the charges mentioned. The fundamental objection lay against his teaching. Yet he claimed, and justly, that he was teaching nothing that could not be found in the articles of the English Church. The burden of his preaching throughout that year 1738 was simply the old Protestant doctrine of justification by faith. But into dead formularies he put life. The statements of Scripture and creed, to which men gave a drowsy assent, or explained away as metaphorical, he accepted as literally, vitally true. He spoke of religion as something to be experienced; not as a comely profession, but as a life. He disclaimed all fanaticism, all special personal revelations; "as to ecstasies," he said in reply to one of his critics, "I rest not on them at all, nor did I ever experience any;" but that the living God should be able and willing to influence directly the soul of the individual man He had created, *that* seemed to Wesley no fanaticism, but an entirely natural thing; belief of it, experience of it, the essence of all religion. Perhaps in his early preaching he may occasionally have urged this truth in too narrow and mandatory fashion; indeed he himself in later years admitted that. But it is difficult to see why his preaching, at the out-

set, should have aroused such opposition from pious Churchmen who realized the meaning of the creed they professed.

After all, however, it was not so much the doctrine as the temper of Wesley's early preaching that gave offence. The entry in his Journal, quoted on a former page, is suggestive. "*My heart was so enlarged to declare the love of God* to all that were oppressed of the devil that I did not wonder in the least when I was afterward told, 'Sir, you must preach here no more.'" The sermons that caused the London clergy to close their pulpits to him were in almost every instance strictly evangelical. How strange such preaching sounded in the pulpits of 1738, any one may understand by looking over some of the popular sermons of that time that have not fallen quite into oblivion, say by Sherlock or Secker. Such ardent love for sinful and wretched men, such confidence in the power of the Gospel to reform and uplift them, was an implied rebuke to the cold, decorous inactivity of the Church. And perhaps it was not strange that the whole body of the English clergy from the bishops down, should decline to take a lesson from the zeal of an itinerant Fellow of Lincoln College, or admit that the work they were set to do could be better done by a group of plebeian preachers, most of them unlearned and ignorant men. Nor need we deny that the preaching of the early Methodists often produced in the classes most affected by the Methodist movement exhibitions of crude, extravagant, and sometimes morbid emotion, distasteful to many thoughtful, conservative persons. There was doubtless ignorance and extravagance in plenty to vex and

alarm those cautious Christians who insist first of all that everything must be done decently and in order. But it was the misfortune of the English Church to see in the Methodist movement for twenty years little else than this ignorance and extravagance; to interpret the intense devotion of the Methodists as heated fanaticism; and instead of welcoming their aid in the work of lifting the nation out of religious apathy and unbelief, to disown them and disavow their work. The Rev. Mr. Church did not much overstate the opinion of many of his fellow-churchmen when he wrote to Wesley of the Methodists, "We must account you our most dangerous enemies."

CHAPTER VI

WESLEY'S PRIVATE LIFE

THE biographer of Wesley must needs forgo the interest belonging to the record of that intimate and domestic life in which a man's real character is often most clearly shown. For it is hardly too much to say that John Wesley had no private life. He had no home. Travelling from one end of England to the other, directing all those varied activities of which he was the centre, looked up to as a Father and Leader by the ever increasing host of Methodists, he nevertheless always impresses us as a lonely man. He had no close family ties. After the death of his mother in 1742, there was no one of his own family, save his brother Charles, with whom he could be in entire sympathy. For Charles, indeed, he cherished an affection most beautiful to the end. Differing, as the two brothers did, strikingly in temperament and often in opinion, no difference ever caused an estrangement or hindered their cordial coöperation in the great work to which they had given their lives. But in 1749 Charles, who up to that time had shared his brother's manner of life, married a most admirable Welsh lady, much younger than himself, whose culture and accomplishments were to make his house for the next forty years an ideal Christian home. After about 1756 he practically closed his itinerant life, and, residing for some twenty years in Bristol

and thereafter in London, gave himself to the care of the societies in those cities. This change in his life, of course, withdrew him somewhat from the companionship of his brother, and left John more alone than before. Of Wesley's seven sisters, Mary, the sweet-tempered, deformed child who had married her father's curate, John Whitelamb, died in 1734; Kezzy, the youngest, died unmarried in 1741. The other five had all made such wretchedly unfortunate marriages as of necessity alienated them in great measure from the sympathy and companionship of their brothers. The sisters all showed, each in her own way, something of the unusual gifts of intellect or of imagination which were the Wesley birthright. Three of them in their early womanhood had formed attachments which their parents — wisely or unwisely — disapproved; but it might be difficult to get together five more worthless creatures than the sisters of John Wesley finally accepted as husbands. Emilia, the eldest, married a lazy apothecary of Epworth, whom she was obliged to support by teaching until he fortunately died, about 1740, and left her to the care of her brothers. She occupied for many years a room adjoining the Methodist Chapel in West Street, London, a saddened, disappointed woman. Robert Ellison, the husband of the second sister, Susanna, was a coarse, loud-mouthed scoundrel. After long years of abuse and neglect, his wife left him, and came up to London where her children were living, and refused ever to see him again. The poor dog himself followed his wife to London some years later, begged for help from his brother-in-law John, got it, reformed — so far as such a paltry, weak-willed charac-

ter could—and finally died in some decency about 1760. Two other sisters, Anne and Hetty, married incorrigible drunkards. Hetty, the most sprightly and imaginative of all the Wesleys, after endless hardships and humiliations from her boorish husband, which broke her fine spirit, died in 1750. The last twenty years of her life were spent in London, where she could at least have the counsel and occasional visits of her brothers. Martha, her mother's favorite and John's best-beloved sister, who exemplified the best moral and intellectual traits of the Wesley family, was of all the sisters most unfortunate in her marriage. Her husband, Westley Hall, had been one of John Wesley's pupils in Oxford, and had taken orders not long before his marriage. But he was, probably from the first, an utter scoundrel and hypocrite. During his long residence as curate of a parish near Salisbury, he fell into the grossest immorality, which he had not even the decency to disguise. He preached — and practised — polygamy, and had the effrontery to bring the companions and children of his shame into his own house. His later years he passed in a kind of licentious vagabondage, and left his wife to provide for herself as she could. Like her other sisters, she was much in London, and won the high esteem of the few who knew her well — among them Samuel Johnson — for the soundness of her judgment and the brilliancy of her conversation. It is evident that no one of these sisters, with such connections, had a home where John Wesley could find welcome. Their presence in London increased his anxieties, without diminishing the loneliness and isolation of his life.

Nor had Wesley many intimate friends outside the circle of his own family. To his lay preachers he was as a bishop and a father; but these humble and devoted men could hardly share his tastes and his knowledge. The temporary breach with Whitefield was quickly healed, and in spite of their pronounced differences in doctrine, and the bitter antagonism of Whitefield's Calvinistic followers, Wesley always accounted the great preacher his trusted friend. "You may read," he said, "Whitefield against Wesley; but you will never read Wesley against Whitefield." In fact, after the brief alienation in 1741, Whitefield never did write against Wesley, but responded with all the warmth of his generous and impulsive nature to the steadier flame of Wesley's friendship. When he died in America, in 1770, it was in accord with his request that Wesley preached his funeral sermon in Whitefield's Tottenham Court Road Tabernacle, and paid a just and moving tribute to his old friend. The story is told that, some days later, a good woman who could not quite forget the doctrinal differences that separated Whitefield from the Wesleyan Methodists, said to Wesley timidly and with great hesitation: "Mr. Wesley, may I ask you a question? Do you expect to see dear Mr. Whitefield in heaven?" After a long pause, Wesley answered solemnly, "No, Madam." "Ah," exclaimed his questioner, "I was afraid you would say so." "But," Wesley added with intense earnestness, "do not misunderstand me, Madam; George Whitefield will stand so near the throne that one like me will never get a glimpse of him!" Yet, though they were genuine friends, the two men were so diametrically opposed in tempera-

ment that it was impossible they should be thoroughly congenial, and the relations between them, at least after 1741, seem not to have been entirely intimate or confidential. Besides, the sharp division of their work in England and the repeated and protracted absences of Whitefield in America, made any close companionship between them impossible during all the later years of Whitefield's life.

After his brother Charles and Whitefield, the most congenial friends of Wesley were two or three of his fellow-clergymen of the Established Church. Of these the first and oldest was Vincent Perronet, Vicar of Shoreham. He was ten years older than Wesley, and a man of singularly good judgment and good temper — a mellow, wise, kindly man. No one enjoyed Wesley's confidence so fully as he. Both the Wesley brothers conferred with him on matters pertaining either to their public work or their private life. When, in 1751, they drew up a mutual agreement to guide them in their relations to the lay preachers, they first consulted Perronet and then included in the paper this article: "That if we should ever disagree in our judgment, we will refer the matter to Mr. Perronet." Charles called him "the Archbishop of the Methodists." It was to Perronet that Charles opened his heart when he had fallen in love with Miss Sarah Gwynne, and yet doubted whether he ought to marry; and it was Perronet, too, — making for once a grievous error of judgment, — who advised John Wesley that he would do well to wed Mrs. Vazeille. For almost forty years, the Shoreham vicarage was the home to which Wesley liked best to return for a day or so of rest or quiet writing.

Another and very different clerical friend of Wesley was William Grimshaw, incumbent of Haworth in Yorkshire, a burly, impetuous, soft-hearted giant, who feared neither mobs nor pamphlets, resisted all attempts to oust him from his parish, and stoutly declared himself to be a Methodist so long as the Methodists were Churchmen. "A few such as he," said Wesley, "would make a nation tremble."

But the nearest of all Wesley's friends, for some thirty years, was a man of quite different temper from either Perronet or Grimshaw. Jean Guillaume de la Fléchère — or John Fletcher as he was known after he had taken up permanent residence in England — was born in Nyon, Switzerland, of a family descended from a noble house of Savoy. His parents intended him for the ministry, and he was educated in Geneva; but he conceived an aversion for the Church, and, like many of his countrymen, determined upon the career of a soldier of fortune. But his attempts to get into active service in Portugal and Flanders were unsuccessful, and he gave up his military plans, and came to England. He rapidly perfected his knowledge of the language, and soon obtained a position as tutor to the sons of a Mr. Hill, whose country-seat was in Shropshire, but who came up to London every year, with his family, to attend the session of Parliament. It was while in the family of Mr. Hill that he became converted and began to lead a life which he himself afterwards confessed was wrongly ascetic. For a time he ate nothing but bread and milk, and practised austerities which doubtless planted the seeds of lifelong disease. He sought out the Methodists, and it was by the advice of Wesley

that, in 1757, he decided to take orders. Two years later he was presented to the living of Madeley, in Yorkshire, which he held the rest of his life. He cherished the warmest affection for Wesley, and brought to him, at a time when he was much in need of it, such aid as no one of his friends could afford. He had attained an excellent mastery of English, — though he always spoke it with a slightly foreign accent, — and Wesley was glad to leave his theological controversy mostly to the pen of an assistant so able and so genial. For Fletcher alone, of all the participants in the bitter Calvinist controversy, knew how to unite force of argument with a kindly temper and a style singularly suave and finished. The purity and simplicity of his nature, his self-sacrificing devotion, endeared him even to his opponents; while his culture, his refined taste, and gentle manners, added to those religious graces, won from Wesley a sympathy such as he felt for no other friend. Fletcher of Madeley was the saint of Methodism. Always of delicate constitution, his intense but sensitive spirit burned out rapidly, and he died at the age of fifty-six. Wesley closed an account of his life with the words: "I was intimately acquainted with him for thirty years. I conversed with him morning, noon, and night, without the least reserve, during a journey of many hundred miles; and in all that time I never heard him speak an improper word, or saw him do an improper action. To conclude: within fourscore years, I have known many excellent men, holy in heart and life, but one equal to him I have not known; one so uniformly and deeply devoted to God. So unblamable a man, in every respect, I have not found

either in Europe or America. Nor do I expect to find such another on this side eternity."

But if Wesley's intimate friends were few and his life isolated, that was not because he was by nature ascetic or indifferent to the charm of good society. His temperament was not, as it has been sometimes represented, cold or self-sufficient. The record of his early university days shows him to have been a genial young fellow, of pleasing manners and brilliant converse. It was no dull recluse whose visits delighted pretty Betty Kirkham and the vivacious young widow, Mrs. Pendarves. Nor was there anything morose or repellent in the more intense religious life of his mature years. "Sour godliness is the devil's own religion," was one of his sayings. It is true that the Journal gives frequent proof of his dislike for that frivolous and vapid society that disported itself at the masquerade or the ridotto, and found its highest intellectual pleasures in the scandal exchanged over a card-table. "I dined at Lady ——'s. We need great grace to converse with great people. From which, therefore (unless in some rare instances), I am glad to be excused. *Horae fugiunt et imputantur.* Of these two hours, I can give no good account."[1] Another entry is more explicit. "How unspeakable is the advantage in point of common sense which middling people have over the rich! There is so much paint and affectation, so many unnecessary words and senseless customs among people of rank as fully justifies the remark made seventeen hundred years ago, '*Rarus enim firme sensus communis in illa Fortuna.*'"[2] This is the criticism of the scholar rather than of the religious devotee; yet Wesley did not

[1] April 21, 1758. [2] June 29, 1758.

think much better of society when two or three of its great ladies, turning devout, adopted Mr. Whitefield and made Methodism the fad of the hour. It is easy to see that he sometimes had more than a little difficulty in keeping his patience with Whitefield's unctuous compliments to the elect ladies.

But if Wesley turned his back upon society, it was not from any feeling of petulance or envy; still less from any indifference to the charm of refinement and intelligence. He had the tastes and culture of a gentleman. All through his life, thoughtful people who had the opportunity of knowing him well found him a most agreeable companion. Samuel Johnson, who knew a social man from an unsocial one as well as anybody in that century, once said to Boswell, "I hate to meet John Wesley; the dog enchants me with his conversation, and then breaks away to go and visit some old woman." Johnson's other remark of similar tenor is more frequently quoted: "Wesley's conversation is good, but he is never at leisure. He is always obliged to go at a certain hour. This is very disagreeable to a man who loves to fold his legs and have his talk out, as I do." Johnson's statements give the cause of the comparative loneliness of Wesley's life. It was not from natural inclination that he declined so many companionships that he might have enjoyed. The simple fact is he had no time for society, hardly for friendship. His whole life was a noble monotony of labor. He uniformly rose at four, summer and winter, and usually had an appointment to preach at five. Not infrequently he followed this morning sermon by three or four more in the same day, riding ten miles or more between

each one and the next. He kept a voluminous Journal, and was always writing something for publication. This ceaseless, methodical activity not only obliged him to forgo those attractions of society which he was fitted both by nature and education to enjoy, but it allowed him no real companionship. It was only when riding on his journeys from place to place that he had any leisure, and then he was usually alone or accompanied only by a valet, and was always reading a book.

Perhaps we should not quarrel with that intense, unremitting activity, without haste, without rest, which enabled him to accomplish such a prodigious deal of work; but it may fairly be questioned whether it did not narrow his habit of thought. He was too much afraid of leisure. He would not allow himself any of those hours of quiet reflection, it may be merely of revery, when the mind lies open to the play of manifold suggestion. One feels that he might have been a wiser and a broader man, could he have learned with Wordsworth that

> "We can feed these minds of ours
> In a wise passiveness."

However that may have been, certain it is that this temper of strenuous preoccupation left him little opportunity to extend the circle of his acquaintance. Doubtless, also, it made him sometimes overimpatient of those commonplace secular matters in which society very properly takes interest. When obliged one afternoon to be in what he calls genteel company, he exclaims: "Oh, what a dull thing is life without religion! I do not wonder that time hangs heavy on the hands of those who know not God." But cer-

tainly a healthy religion should permit a man of breeding and culture to stay even in "genteel company" for two hours without being bored. Nor is it quite clear, in spite of the testimony of Johnson, that, with this constant feeling of urgency, Wesley could have been a really first-rate talker. Of argument and homily, which were the kinds of talk Johnson himself most affected, he may have been a master; but the easy give and take of real conversation presupposes a feeling of leisure, of time to spare, which Wesley never had. But it was only a sense of duty, though possibly a mistaken one, that drove Wesley so much away from associations that would have been grateful to his taste and culture. His life was given largely to service with and for a class of people with whom he naturally would have had but a limited sympathy. We do not justly estimate the nobility of his work until we realize how much sacrifice of all that was most congenial it must have cost him. Some of the incidental records in the Journal have a kind of half-pathetic suggestiveness. Thus when he has a day of quiet after a fortnight of mobs and riot in Cornwall, he writes: "Oh, how pleasant a thing is even outward peace! What would not a man give for it, but a good conscience!" When, in his eighty-first year, he made a brief trip to Holland, that he enjoyed with all the eager curiosity of a boy, he notes in the Journal two or three times that all the people he meets are delightfully refined and courteous; that one of his hosts speaks Latin very correctly, and "is of a most easy and affable bearing"; that his hostess another day received him "with that easy openness and affability" which, he adds, "is almost peculiar to Christians *and persons of quality.*"

For one reason in particular it might have been better for Wesley if he had cultivated a wider acquaintance with people of a social rank the same as his own. One of his early critics, Mr. Knox, speaking of Wesley's quick sensitiveness to all innocent pleasures and readiness to love all that was really lovely, adds quaintly, "To interesting females, especially, this affection constantly showed itself." Wesley was certainly very sensitive to the charm of woman's society; but the "females" upon whom he bestowed his highest regard would not generally be pronounced "interesting." Everybody knows that John Wesley was not fortunate in what the older moralists used to call "the conduct of the affections." A man can hardly make a worse mistake than to choose as a wife a woman decidedly below himself in intelligence and social aptitudes. Wesley made that mistake — twice. Had it seemed good to an all-wise Providence that he should marry Betty Kirkham when he was about twenty-seven, his life might have been happier, and the great Wesleyan movement might perhaps have taken no harm; for it may be doubted whether the woman ever lived whose affection could have turned aside John Wesley either from his inclination or his duty. But assuredly all his subsequent attachments were ill placed. After his decision to give up Sophia Hopkey at the dictation of the Moravian elders in Savannah, he seems not to have thought of marriage for some ten years. His brother Charles and himself had made a mutual agreement that neither would marry without the consent of the other; it was with some natural reluctance that John gave this consent when Charles, in 1748, wished to wed Miss Gwynne.

Moved possibly by unconscious envy of the happy lot of Charles, and doubtless feeling an added touch of loneliness at the loss of his brother's more intimate companionship, Wesley, before the close of that year, decided that he had found the heaven-sent partner for himself.

During the summer of 1748, while on one of his visits to the north of England, he was overtaken by temporary illness, which obliged him to stay some days in the orphanage at Newcastle, where Methodist ministers had hospital privileges. During this illness he was cared for by one of the nurses of the orphanage, Mrs. Grace Murray, a young widow of thirty-two, whose husband, a London sailor, had been drowned some years previously. Before her marriage this Grace Murray had been a domestic servant in London, and seems to have enjoyed few opportunities of education or society. She was attractive in person and very efficient in practical affairs, but without much self-possession, and of a fickle, hysterical temperament. Wesley had met her often in London and Newcastle, and within the last two years had found her assistance in the Newcastle orphanage and in religious work in the vicinity of very great value. A few months later, he declared, with something of a lover's partiality, that no other woman in England had done so much good as Grace Murray. Now, after six days of her care in the orphanage, he was convinced that she was the woman divinely intended for his wife — and told her so. She responded, "This is all I could have wished for under heaven!" What followed, however, may remind one of Sir Roger de Coverley's despairing exclamation, "You can't im-

agine what it is to have to do with a widow!" One of Wesley's biographers[1] summarily declares, "Grace Murray was a flirt." Another[2] asserts that she reciprocated Wesley's affection, but "with shrinking diffidence."

What seems certain is that Mrs. Murray had another suitor she was unwilling to lose altogether, and was very much at a loss to know upon which of the two she ought finally to bestow her hand. A year before, she had cared for one of Wesley's preachers, John Bennett, through a long illness, and ever since had been in correspondence with him. When Wesley now left Newcastle she accompanied him through the northern counties till they reached Bolton, where Bennett resided. Here she stopped, while Wesley went on, hoping that they might meet again soon, "and part no more." Three days after they parted, she promised marriage to John Bennett. "Here," says Wesley, in his curious account of the affair,[3] "was her first false step" — which is certainly a mild judgment. During the next twelve months, Mrs. Murray, who, whatever her virtues, cannot have had much decision of character, was unable to be sure for more than six weeks together what were the dictates either of duty or of affection. Perhaps one of her acquaintances was not far wrong in the opinion that if she consulted her ambition, she would marry Wesley; if she followed her affections, she would marry Bennett. At last, in the autumn of 1749, after having

[1] Tyerman. [2] Stevens.

[3] "Narrative of a Remarkable Transaction in the Early Life of John Wesley. From an original manuscript." (Second Edition. London, 1862, p. 62.) The Ms. is in the British Museum.

been engaged to, and disengaged from, each of her suitors twice over, she concluded that Wesley had the stronger claim upon both her conscience and her heart. Marriage might soon have followed, had not Charles Wesley now appeared upon the scene. He had himself just married a refined and accomplished young woman of excellent family; he heard with dismay that his brother was about to take as a wife a woman without education, who was engaged to another man. Such a step he feared would be fatal not only to his brother's happiness but to his influence, and would bring disaster upon the cause in which they both were interested. He hurried to the north of England, and finding reproach and dissuasion alike vain with his brother, addressed his expostulations to Grace Murray herself. The poor woman, distracted by his persistent assertion that marriage with Wesley would be a violation of her pre-contract and a grievous wrong to both her suitors, persuaded also, it now seems, by some means, that Wesley was willing to give her up, changed her mind again, and consented to accompany Charles Wesley to Newcastle where Bennett was staying. Here Charles made her peace with Bennett by the plea that the blame for her vacillation should be mostly laid not upon her, but upon Wesley — as Charles himself then thought. Five days later, she and Bennett were married in St. Andrew's Church. Charles Wesley prudently remained in Newcastle till the ceremony was safely over, and then accompanied the newly married couple to Leeds, where all three met John. At the meeting, Charles, whose naturally hasty temper had been tried beyond patience by what he considered the inexcus-

able folly of his brother, at first declared that he renounced all intercourse with him save "What I would have with an heathen man and a publican." But after hearing the whole story from John, he pronounced himself "utterly amazed," and was inclined to shift any blame upon Grace Murray. John, for his part, would not quarrel with his brother for what he must have deemed a most unwarrantable interference; and he would not blame the woman. But the week after her marriage, he recorded his own poignant grief in a series of stanzas that have at least the merit of utter sincerity. Forty years afterward, when both were near the close of life, they met again for a few moments; and it was evident to the friend who accompanied Wesley that the wound, though it had long since ceased to smart, had never been forgotten.[1] The affections of the man were deep and tender; but it was certainly some proof of ill-regulated sentiment that he should have bestowed them upon one who, whatever her activity and success in religious work, was so ill fitted in other respects to become his companion.

Yet marriage with Grace Murray, unfortunate as it might have proved, would have saved Wesley from a worse fate. On that later story the biographer does not care to linger. Under date of February 2, 1751, Wesley writes in his Journal, "Having received a full answer from Mr. P. [erronet], I was clearly convinced that I ought to marry." This time he evidently determined to be beforehand with his brother, for on the same day he announced to him his fixed resolution. "I was thunderstruck," says Charles,

[1] Moore's "Life of Wesley," II, 171.

"and could only answer he had given me the first blow, and his marriage would come like the *coup de grace*. Trusty Ned Perronet told me the person was Mrs. Vazeille, one of whom I never had the least suspicion. I refused his company to chapel, and retired to mourn with my faithful Sally." Charles Wesley knew there was cause for mourning. Mrs. Vazeille was the widow of a London merchant, an essentially vulgar woman with a tendency to hysteria. What attractions of person, mind, or temper she can have had for such a man as Wesley must always remain a mystery. She had been known to both the brothers for about two years, but not intimately, and John's decision to marry seems to have been taken suddenly. He doubtless intended that the ceremony should not be long delayed; but it was by an accident precipitated more speedily than he had purposed. A week after the entry in his Journal just cited, he slipped on the ice while crossing London Bridge, injuring his ankle so that he could not walk or stand upon his feet. He was immediately taken to the residence of Mrs. Vazeille on Threadneedle Street and occupied the remainder of the week — so the Journal records — "partly in prayer, reading, and conversation, partly in writing on Hebrew Grammar and 'Lessons for Children.'" As one of his biographers remarks, the "conversation" was probably of most importance — for at the beginning of the next week he was married to Mrs. Vazeille. There was long leisure for repentance.

Within a fortnight he had so far recovered from his lameness as to resume his travels, and set out for Bristol, leaving his wife in London, and after a short visit there went north again. Mrs. Wesley naturally

disliked being left alone either in London or Bristol, and Wesley for some four years took her with him wherever she could be induced to go. But within a year after the marriage, her jealousy, suspicion, and constant complaint or accusation made life almost intolerable. Probably the best of wives might have found that life with John Wesley laid a heavy tribute upon her patience. Not that he lacked affection. But he was forty-eight years old; he was confirmed in all his habits of life; and he was engaged in a work that left him little time or thought for domestic cares. He would never have consented, as Charles Wesley did, not many years after his marriage, to give up most of his itinerant work and fix himself in a home. In fact, he agreed with Mrs. Vazeille that he should not be expected to travel a mile the less after his marriage than before; in the event, he was probably glad to travel more. Doubtless, with his varied and exacting personal responsibilities, it would have been better had he not married at all. He was mistaken in the conviction recorded in the Journal that "in my present circumstances I might be more useful in the married state." Moreover, we may admit that his notions as to the headship of the family were such as any high-spirited woman might not have accepted without some protest. In a tract on Marriage he says that the duties of a wife may all be reduced to two: 1. She must recognize herself as the inferior of her husband. 2. She must behave as such. This paper, to be sure, was written later in Wesley's life, and its rather mediæval theory of the marriage relation may have been largely an inference from his own unfortunate experience.

Mrs. Wesley, at all events, did not accept any such theory. She was obstinate, peevish, and subject to fits of violent passion. Wesley was just, and — in the opinion of his brother at least — marvellously patient; but he could hardly have felt much affection for such a wife, and some of his letters to her evince a certain long-suffering assertion of superiority not exactly conciliatory. One of them closes with the advice: "Be content to be a private, insignificant person, known and loved by God and me. Leave me to be governed by God and my own conscience. Then shall I govern you with gentle sway, and show that I do indeed love you, even as Christ the Church." One minded to extenuate the guilt of Mrs. Wesley might not unplausibly urge that, after having made the sad mistake of marrying such a wife, Wesley might have conceded somewhat more than there is proof he ever did to the irritating weaknesses of her character. Still more unfortunate was it that, in his innocent unwisdom, he allowed himself to write letters of religious advice and sympathy to other women, especially to a Mrs. Sarah Ryan, housekeeper of his Kingswood School. This Sarah Ryan was an ignorant, rather flippant, domestic servant, who had — before her conversion, of course — married three husbands, one after the other, without waiting for either to die; and now finding herself somewhat puzzled to know whose wife of the three she should be, and having been treated very badly by all three, concluded, as they all were providentially out of the country, she would keep the name of the second, but be the wife of neither. I must agree with Mr. Tyerman that it was imprudent of Wesley to make this woman, however blessed her experiences or exemplary her present life, the house-

keeper of his Kingswood School. It was much more imprudent in him to write her letters of religious confidence when he had a wife insanely irritable and suspicious, and to insert in these letters passages referring to that wife. The knowledge of such correspondence threw Mrs. Wesley into paroxysms of jealousy. She habitually intercepted and opened his letters; she sometimes interpolated compromising passages of her own invention in them, and then read them to prejudiced persons; in one or two instances she gave such doctored letters to the public prints. She spread the most calumnious reports as to her husband's character. Her conduct, indeed, was so scandalous and at times so violent, as to prove that she cannot have been perfectly sane. She left Wesley repeatedly for long periods, and finally, in 1771, departed, taking with her a bundle of Wesley's letters and papers, vowing never to return. Wesley simply noted the fact in his Journal and added, "*Non eam reliqui; non dimisi; non revocabo.*" She seems, however, to have returned of her own accord, but only for a short time. When she died, ten years later, she was in separation from Wesley, and he was not even informed of her death until three days after her funeral.

Perhaps it is not strange that, after such an experience, Wesley should have repeatedly given to his young preachers who thought to marry the laconic advice of Punch, "Don't." Not that he was coldly insensible to the power and charm of youthful sentiment; on the contrary, as his favorite niece prettily said, "My uncle John always showed peculiar sympathy to young people in love." His advice was prompted not by a dislike for sentiment, but by a distrust of it. Knowing from his own case how fatally easy it is to become unequally

yoked together with believers as well as with unbelievers, he feared lest his preachers, like himself, might have their judgment blinded by an excess of that amiable quality. But it certainly was unfortunate that a great religious leader should have found no happiness in the most normal of human relations, and should have been inclined to dissuade other religious teachers from entering it.

The opening year of the second half of the century was a trying period for Wesley in many ways. The more violent opposition of mobs was beginning to lessen, but his preaching was regarded with no less hostility by the clergy and the magistrates. The worst attack of Lavington and the Bishop of London's severe Pastoral Letter were both published in 1757. The mutual attitude of the Methodists and the Church was a matter of constant anxiety. The visitation and oversight of his societies was an increasing burden, more heavy now that Charles, since his marriage, afforded him less assistance. A journey through Ireland in the spring and summer of 1750 was especially toilsome. He wrote one evening in June, after preaching to a little company in an Irish village: "Oh, who should drag me into a great city if I did not know there is another world. How gladly could I spend the remainder of my busy life in solitude and retirement." He was encouraged by the marvellous spreading of genuine religion over the island; but, as was only natural, after the first glow of resolve, many members of his societies fell back into their old habits. Nor was it always easy to enforce the requirements of religion upon the practice of his converts. Some honest members of the societies could not

see why Methodists might not cheat the customs or sell their votes, as all the rest of the world did. But Wesley's discipline was strict, and offenders who would not promptly mend their ways were dropped. Under this winnowing process the society at Bristol, at one time, lost half its members. Doctrinal disputes, too, more bitter than intelligent, broke out in many of the societies, and vexed Wesley's practical and tolerant temper. The Calvinist controversy, in particular, which later was to prove so virulent, as early as 1750 began to provoke a good deal of hard feeling. Then, too, the fringe of fanatics, cranks, and hypocrites that always hangs upon the skirts of any aggressive religious movement, sometimes sorely tried his patience and his common sense. His own religious teaching was eminently sane and practical; but it was to be expected that ignorant zeal should sometimes drive it into absurdities of misinterpretation. At one place he finds a "half dozen poor wretches" who assured him that they "lived in the Spirit," and were therefore beyond the need of the sacraments and prayer, and beyond the possibility of sin. Two men called on him one day stating that they were sent from God with a message to him that he was shortly to be "borned again," adding that they proposed to stay in the house till that was done, unless they were turned out. Wesley assured them that they could remain, and courteously showed them into another room while he kept on with his writing. It was tolerably cold, he says, and they had neither meat nor drink; but they sat there patiently till nightfall, and then, despairing of Wesley's new birth, quietly got up and went away. Occasional instances of such fanaticism or credulity are scattered through the Journal.

He now and then had to warn some of his own preachers against extravagances or crudities of utterance that tended to discredit their teaching. Besides all these anxieties, we may be certain that the disappointment of his affection for Grace Murray and the growing certainty that his marriage was ill judged must have weighed upon his spirits. Wesley never fretted or worried; but a burden is no less sorely heavy, though it is borne silently.

As a result of these labors and anxieties, in 1753, Wesley's health broke down. Hitherto his constitution, if not exactly robust, had been elastic. His ceaseless activity had not seemed to depress either his health or his spirits. But in the summer of that year, we find in the Journal mention of fatigue, headaches, and fever. In October his illness increased, with chills, weakness, and a violent cough. By the end of November he supposed himself in the grasp of fatal pulmonary disease. At the command of his physician, the eminent Dr. Fothergill, he stopped preaching and retired into the country at Lewisham. The evening of his arrival there, thinking his life near its close, "to prevent vile panegyric," he wrote his epitaph: —

Here lieth the body
of
John Wesley
A Brand plucked out of the Burning :
Who died of a consumption in the fifty-first year of his age,
Nor leaving, after his debts are paid,
Ten Pounds behind Him :
Praying
God be merciful to *me*, an unprofitable servant !

(He ordered that this, if any, inscription be placed upon his tombstone.)

The mourning all over England, the days of special prayer for him, the multitude of letters of sympathy, attested the place he had won in the hearts of a host of Methodists. Whitefield, just then in England, poured out his heart in a farewell letter that showed how deep and tender, in spite of all their doctrinal differences, was his love for his old friend.

But the disease proved less obstinate than had been feared. After a few weeks of rest, the worst symptoms began to abate, and at the beginning of the next year, 1754, he was able to remove to the Hot Wells, near Bristol, where he remained some three months. In the spring, though feeble, he attended his Conference; but his recovery was slow and it was nearly a year before he regained his old strength and vigor. But while unable to preach, his pen was kept busy. He spent the first half of the year in writing his "Notes on the New Testament," a work which he says, "I should not have attempted had I not been so ill as not to be able to travel or to preach, and yet so well as to be able to write."

Early in the next year, 1755, his strength seemed fully restored and he was riding and preaching as usual. Never again, with the exception of a short but sharp illness in 1775, caused by sleeping on the ground, did Wesley suffer from serious illness. On his eighty-fifth birthday, remembering thankfully his uniform good health throughout a long and busy life, he imputes it: "1. To my constant exercise and change of air. 2. To my never having lost a night's sleep, sick or well, at land or at sea, since I was born.[1] 3. To my having sleep at command, so that, whenever I feel my-

[1] In this his memory was slightly at fault. See *supra*, p. 120.

self almost worn out, I call it and it comes, day or night. 4. To my having constantly, for over sixty years, risen at four in the morning. 5. To my constant preaching at five in the morning for above fifty years. 6. To my having had so little pain in my life, and so little sorrow or anxious care." No doubt his life in the open air, especially his habit of preaching out of doors, checked a native tendency to pulmonary disease. He always believed that his friend Fletcher, if he had consented to travel a few months on horseback, would have thrown off the disease to which he finally succumbed. But the last of the six causes in Wesley's list is the one to which we are inclined to give most credit. It is not work that kills, but worry; and John Wesley never worried. Like most people of superior efficiency, he had an equable temperament and great power of self-command. The slight little man who for fifty years had carried such a tremendous load of responsibility could affirm that he had known little "anxious care."

Taking good care of his own health, he always insisted that other people should do the same. He had no patience with interesting valetudinarianism. He was always concerned for the health of the people in his societies, and sometimes spoke almost with envy of the service rendered to humanity by a good physician. Of his own books, the one he himself was inclined to value most was his "Primitive Physic," a collection of simple prescriptions for the treatment of almost all diseases and accidents, with suggestions as to care and hygiene. Published first in 1748, it ran through twenty-three editions during Wesley's lifetime. Some of the remedies prescribed are very odd, and a few of them purely superstitious; yet the book has been pro-

nounced by good medical authority the most useful manual of the kind then to be found in the language. As early as 1746, Wesley began the custom, in Bristol, of distributing medicines gratuitously to the poorer members of his societies, with the advice of an apothecary and a surgeon. In six months, six hundred cases had been treated and fifty-one thoroughly cured. The success of the experiment induced him, next year, to set up a dispensary which rendered great service to the poor of Bristol for half a century. Similar dispensaries were set up in London and in Newcastle; and in some cases arrangements were made to secure free treatment for the poor in their homes. Wesley himself was much interested in anything new in medical theory or practice; in especial, he was assured of the great therapeutic value of electricity, when, about 1780, that began to excite attention. He purchased an electrical apparatus himself, and specified certain hours when any persons might come to "try the virtue of this surprising medicine." Hundreds, perhaps thousands, he thinks were greatly benefited by this treatment.

The record of Wesley's private life after his recovery from the illness of 1754, to the end, presents no striking deviations from the daily routine of labor. As the roads throughout England improved, he journeyed more frequently by coach or post-chaise rather than on horseback, though he always preferred the simpler mode of travel. Rising early and sleeping early; moving over England constantly in his never ending round of visitations to the societies; preaching now in chapels, oftener in a market-place, on a hillside, or in some vast natural amphitheatre like that at Gwennap, in Cornwall; not only meeting his societies but giving exhortation and

instruction to thousands of individual seekers after a better life; reading, writing, compiling, publishing book after book; his life ran on without interruption or any change in the method of his ceaseless activity. With the exception of the hour at morning and at evening which he always gave to prayer and reflection, there was hardly a waking moment in his day in which he was not engaged in some labor for the good of others. When, in 1778, the new City Road Chapel was built, rooms were provided for his use in the house adjoining, and that was nominally his home for the rest of his life; but he stayed there no more than he had been used to stay in the Foundery.

In 1772 his brother Charles fixed his residence in the parish of Marylebone, London, three miles from the Foundery, occupying a large house which had been put at his disposal by a wealthy friend. Mrs. Wesley was an accomplished musician, and her children inherited from her — as, indeed, from their father also — special musical aptitude. Her two sons, Charles and Samuel, became eminent organists and composers, and the Wesley house was for years a centre of musical society. John Wesley was always welcome there, of course, and occasionally allowed himself a brief rest in these congenial surroundings. He was especially fond of the daughter of Charles, "Little Sally," — as she was called to distinguish her from her mother, — and she returned his love with a most enthusiastic devotion. One day in 1775 he had promised to take her with him on a trip to Canterbury; but just at that time Wesley's wife, then at her worst, had obtained some private letters of his, and after mutilating them to suit her purpose, threatened to publish them next day in the *Morning*

Post. Charles Wesley, learning her intention, hurried over to the Foundery to warn his brother and advise him to postpone his journey. "No," said John, "when I devoted to God my ease, my time, my life, did I except my reputation? Tell Sally we will go to Canterbury to-morrow." They went, the old man of seventy-two pointing out to the girl of eighteen every noteworthy object on the road he knew so well, and beguiling the long miles by having her read to him from Beattie's new poem, "The Minstrel."

It was seldom, however, that Wesley found time for any period, however short, of rest or recreation. Still less would he allow himself any of the luxuries of life, hardly even its comforts. Never was a man with tastes more simple. He made no virtue of his austerities, at least not after his early High Church days; but in a world full of want he could not permit himself wealth. The sale of his books during the later years of his life brought him annually an income of about a thousand pounds; but he gave it all away. When the officers of the excise once sent him the formal notice to "make due entry" of his plate, he replied: "Sirs, I have two silver spoons here in London, and two in Bristol. This is all I have at present, and I shall not buy any more while so many around me want bread." His personal gifts to charity amounted to over thirty thousand pounds; but it is doubtful whether there was ever a time when he had on hand more than twenty pounds not needed for immediate use.

CHAPTER VII

THE YEARS OF SUCCESS

The last thirty years of Wesley's life were years of recognition and success. After about 1760 active opposition to his work mostly ceased. It was only seldom, and in the most remote quarters, that his preachers encountered any violence from mobs. The English clergy, though not generally cordial, were at least no longer actively hostile. A strong evangelical sentiment had grown up within the Church Establishment, which recognized the beneficent character of Wesley's work, and sympathized heartily with his motives, though not approving all his methods. No one, indeed, not wilfully blind, could fail to see the good that had been wrought. Hardly a large town in England but had its Wesleyan Society, and often among the members of these societies could be found the men who before their conversion belonged to the most dangerous, and it might have seemed, the most irreclaimable classes of society. Whole communities, before shiftless and impoverished, under the influence of the new enthusiasm, had become temperate, law-abiding, and thrifty. Wesley used to say that he now feared for his people the temptations of wealth, since there was nothing to hinder Methodists from growing rich; and he would urge upon them his own maxim, "Earn all you can, save all you can, give all you can." And, best of

all, to Wesley's thought, a more vital religion was spreading steadily among the English people, a religion that could be experienced as well as believed, that transformed the outer life by renewing the inner life, that gave strength for all duty or hardship, hope in all trial or sorrow. In the Established Church and in the dissenting bodies there was a deeper, more intimate sense of the meaning of Christianity to the individual. The phrases of the New Testament which had been taken as the figurative expression of an unattainable ideal became realized in the daily life of thousands of devout people all over the island.

Some of the sorest trials of Wesley's during this period of his life came from Methodists themselves. He himself never countenanced extravagance or fanaticism. But it is not strange that some few of his preachers, without the habit or even the power of clear mental analysis, should interpret the statements of Scripture by their own narrow and sometimes morbid experiences, and so announce very extravagant notions of the Christian life. This tendency was seen especially in connection with the doctrine of sanctification or Christian perfection. As enjoined by Wesley, this doctrine meant little more than that complete and loving devotion of the will to the service of God which issues in habitual righteousness of life. There would seem to be no extravagance in asserting this to be the ideal condition of religious living, after which every Christian should strive; it certainly cannot be our duty to give an incomplete or divided allegiance to the Master. Wesley was careful to avoid the term "sinless perfection" as liable to misapprehension and likely to sanction antinomian and fanatical claims. Moreover, although he

urged this high state of religious attainment upon all Christians as an ideal to be striven for, and certainly believed that it had been reached by many members of his societies, it seems clear that he never explicitly claimed it for himself. He deemed there was no inconsistency in urging all Christians to seek a spiritual state which he himself desired, but which his clear and scrupulously honest self-insight would not allow him confidently to profess. He found difficulty in bringing his teaching on this matter into agreement with that of his brother Charles. To Charles it seemed clear that anything to be justly called Christian perfection could only be attained gradually, as the result of the long discipline of faithful living. He was inclined to distrust either the intelligence or the sincerity of those who thought themselves to have gained in a day or an hour that sainthood which crowns the education of a righteous life. John Wesley, on the other hand, insisted that many whose sincerity he could not doubt professed to have been brought to this state of entire devotion, with its consequent righteousness and peace, by a sudden, supernatural blessing. It is not necessary to think there was any essential contradiction in the views of the two brothers. It is possible to hold that the most normal way of reaching any high moral or spiritual condition is by the gradual education of effort and obedience, while at the same time we may admit that, in many instances, some sudden access of truth or feeling may lift a man from a lower to a higher plane of spiritual life, which he maintains thereafter. Yet it must be admitted that such a doctrine is peculiarly open to misinterpretation by a hasty enthusiasm. It is probably wiser to insist only on the duty of a healthy

Christian life to strive constantly after higher attainments, rather than to encourage efforts, that are likely to be spasmodic, after some special and sudden perfection.

It was not until after 1760 that any serious trouble arose from the teaching of Wesley and his preachers on this matter, or from ill-considered professions by members of his societies. But in the winter of 1760–1761 there was a deepening of religious interest among all denominations of Christians throughout the island. In Wesley's London societies this intensification of religious feeling and desire was especially marked. In most cases productive of nothing but good, it occasionally ran into most unfortunate extravagance and fanaticism. Pious and thoughtful John Fletcher, hearing of the agitation in London, wrote in alarm from his Madeley vicarage to Charles Wesley: "Many of our brethren are overshooting sober Christianity in London. Oh, that I could stand in the gap! Oh, that I could, by sacrificing myself, shut this immense abysm of enthusiasm which opens its mouth among us! The corruption of the best things is always the worst corruption."

One George Bell, who had been a corporal in the Life Guards, professed entire sanctification sometime in 1762, and was allowed by Wesley to hold a few meetings for prayer, with a number of his friends, in the society room at the Foundery. But the man soon developed symptoms of the wildest fanaticism. In the early weeks of 1763, he began preaching publicly in Hanover Square, declaring that the ordinary forms of worship and the Sacraments of the Church were needless for those who, like himself, had been freed from

sin, and announcing that the coming of Christ and the end of earthly things was at hand. He even went so far as to name as the date of this consummation, the 28th of February. Wesley hastened to issue a card stating that Bell was not a member of any one of his societies, and denouncing in the name of all Methodists his conduct and his teaching. But crowds of foolish people still flocked to hear him, partly from curiosity, partly from fear, until the city authorities felt it necessary to interfere. On the day before the expected end, Bell with some of his followers ascended a little eminence in the outskirts of London to take their last look at the doomed city; but two constables, learning of their purpose, were there before them, and quietly put Bell under arrest. He was taken before a Southwark magistrate, and on the day he had fixed for his translation, was safely lodged in jail. After his release he gave up all religion, and ended his career in some sort of half-crazy radicalism.

This ignorant and loud-mouthed fanatic might have done little harm to Methodism, had he not received the support of one of Wesley's earliest and hitherto most trusted preachers, Thomas Maxfield. Maxfield, it will be remembered, was the Bristol convert who had first alarmed Wesley by venturing to preach in London, and then had received his approval as his first formally recognized lay preacher. Later he had received ordination at the hands of the bishop of Londonderry, and for twenty years had been one of Wesley's most efficient helpers. Of humble birth, and without education, he had married a woman of considerable wealth, and by his energy and ability had come to be perhaps the most prominent of the London preachers. Natu-

rally somewhat domineering in temper, and perhaps a little vain, he had been flattered by his influence and the confidence reposed in him, till he had come to regard himself as the coadjutor and almost the equal of Wesley.

Maxfield professed a high form of religious experience; but Wesley, having confidence in his sincerity and his good sense, assigned to his charge, in 1760, the direction of a little group of London Methodists who seemed in danger of running into very wild notions on the matter of sanctification. Maxfield, however, instead of tempering the extravagance of these enthusiasts, encouraged it, and in the course of the next two years — perhaps without altogether intending to do so — made himself the centre of all the fanaticism in the London societies. His followers, with his approval, declared themselves to have reached a religious condition in which they were without sin or the danger of it, to be above the need of the ordinary ministrations of the Church, and quite beyond the possibility of profitable instruction by any who had not reached the same exalted experience with themselves. Maxfield himself later denied that he had ever openly sanctioned the vagaries of Bell; but he certainly did not openly discourage them, and the two men were considered leaders of all the more erratic members of the society in London. Wesley repeatedly expostulated with Maxfield; he published, in 1762, a sober tract of "Cautions and Directions to the Greatest Professors in the Methodist Societies"; but his efforts to check the tide of extravagance were only partially successful. Maxfield grew more jealous and bitter, and in April of 1763, he withdrew from Wesley altogether, taking with him over two

hundred of the Foundery society, and formed a congregation of his own in Moorfields. In later years his temper grew less acrid, but he was never again one of Wesley's preachers.

These dissensions and extravagances were the source of deep regret to Wesley, and they doubtless did something to discredit Methodism in the eyes of a hostile or indifferent public. Yet their final result was, perhaps, not altogether injurious. The schism in the London society purged it of ignorance and delusion, and made its members, for the future, more thoughtful and prudent. Wesley, for his part, found it necessary to define more carefully his views on the vexed subject that had caused so much trouble; while his attitude during the whole period of excitement was an assurance that Methodism had no place for credulity or fanaticism.

More bitter and more discreditable to religion was the Calvinistic controversy which reached its climax about ten years later. Between Whitefield and Wesley, after the reconciliation which followed their brief alienation in 1741, there was always a cordial sympathy. Neither would modify or conceal his opinions upon the points of difference between them; yet both agreed not to make these matters of controversy needlessly prominent in their preaching. Whitefield, when in England, occasionally spoke in the Foundery and in other preaching places of Wesley's societies throughout the island; but, for the most part, their work was done in separation. And after about 1750 a change in Whitefield's methods and associations, while it had little effect on their friendship, tended to dissociate them yet further in their labors and their companionships.

As early as 1739, Whitefield's preaching had at-

tracted the attention of that great lady, Selina, Countess of Huntingdon, and during the winter of 1741–1742, when Whitefield was in London, many titled ladies flocked in her train to hear him. Lady Townshend, Lady Frankland, Lady Hinchinbrooke, the Duchess of Ancaster, the Duchess of Queensberry,—"Kitty, ever fair and ever young," — all were found in Whitefield's audiences. The proud old Duchess of Buckingham, though she declared it "highly offensive and insulting" to be told that her heart was "as sinful as that of the commonest wretches," nevertheless consented to hear the favorite preacher of the Countess; and the great Sarah, Duchess of Marlborough, professed herself eager to hear any one who could do her good. When, seven years later, in 1748, Whitefield came back to London after a long absence in America, his reception was still more flattering. The Countess had now taken him definitely under her patronage, made him her domestic Chaplain, and opened her salon to his sermons. Methodism became for a little time the fad of the hour. Most of the great ladies of the Court bowed in the Countess of Huntingdon's drawing-room. My Lord Bolingbroke, with "that saint, our friend Lord Chesterfield," listened with admiration to the "apostolical person," — as Bolingbroke termed him, — while Bubb Dodington, George Selwyn, Lord Lyttleton, Lord Townshend, Lord Sandwich, Lord North, William Pitt, the Duke of Cumberland, Frederick, Prince of Wales, and a long array of other titled folk swelled the company of his hearers. "If you think of coming to England," wrote Walpole to Horace Mann, "you must prepare yourself with Methodism. I really think by that time it will be necessary."

There is no reason to charge Whitefield with any foolish vanity over this popularity in the world of rank and fashion; but it was in part the hope of permanent influence there, encouraged by the advice of the Countess, that led him to change somewhat his plan of work and his relation to the Methodist movement. Up to this time, he had been recognized as having a certain authority over the numerous societies formed in England and Wales among those Methodists holding Calvinistic opinions; though that authority was not secured by any such strict organization as that which obtained in the societies under the control of Wesley. But now, at the close of 1748, Whitefield seems to have determined to sever his official connection with the Calvinistic societies, and to make no further attempt to form such societies, but rather to give himself, while in England, to the work of a preacher and evangelist. The Countess did not look with much favor upon the multiplication of societies like Wesley's, ministered to by lay preachers, and tending constantly toward separation from the Church. It was, rather, her desire to stimulate the growth of vital religion within the Church, and, with that purpose, to secure patronage and influence for preachers of a pronounced evangelical type. She was on the watch for young men of promise who were of devout and aggressive religious character; she provided means for their education, and then used her influence to procure for them ordination. She usually had several protégés in the universities; and in 1768 she founded a college of her own in Trevecca, Wales, for the training of young men who were to enter the ministry, either in the Established Church or in any other Protestant denomination.

All these measures had Wesley's cordial approval. He now and then betrayed a little impatience at Whitefield's pious complacency over his "elect ladies," and probably was more than a little doubtful whether any lasting work of grace was being wrought in the hearts of those great but giddy folk who listened to the fashionable Methodist one night, and the next night crowded to the theatre or the ridotto. Whitefield, for his part, with his impulsive nature, was always liable to moods in which he thought Wesley unjust or jealous; but their friendship was too deep and their zeal too intense for the cause in which they both were laboring to allow any lasting disturbance of the sympathy between them. Some of Whitefield's preachers, indeed, were not so cautious or so charitable; and, as early as 1739, spoke bitterly against the doctrine and the discipline of Wesley. So long, however, as Whitefield was in England, there was little danger of an outbreak of virulent controversy.

But in September, 1769, Whitefield sailed on his seventh and last voyage to America; one year from that time he died at Newburyport. When he was gone, there was no curb upon the violence of some of the Countess of Huntingdon's younger ministers. Two of them in particular, though we must suppose them pious and earnest men, gained an unenviable reputation for rancor in controversy, Toplady and Rowland Hill.

Augustus Montague Toplady was the son of an army officer, and was born in 1740. He had some training in Westminster School, but at the death of his father the widowed mother removed with her son to a small estate in Ireland, and entered him at Trinity College,

Dublin. Shortly before his admission to college, he heard one of Wesley's lay preachers, professed conversion, and decided to take orders. In those early days he looked up to Wesley as his spiritual father, and wrote him — as so many did — for counsel as to his religious life; but his theological opinions seem to have been early inclined toward Calvinism. On leaving college, he came over to England and obtained the small living of Blagdon in Somerset, which he exchanged a few years later for the vicarage of Broadhembury in Devon. While here, he came under the more immediate influence of Lady Huntingdon. He frequently preached in her chapel at Bath, and soon came to be accounted one of her most useful helpers. Ardent and impetuous in temper, with a vein of genuine poetry in his nature, he threw himself into his every undertaking with a zeal that soon burned out a feeble and sickly body. A brilliant and rapid extempore preacher, he had little breadth or power of thought. He never could see more than one side of any question, and thus could hardly help impugning the honesty of those who differed with him. He carried into controversy all the intense sincerity of a narrow man, and often allowed his zeal for what he thought truth to hurry him into unchristian bitterness of feeling and indecent violence of speech. Some of his pamphlets unite the ardor of the devotee with the manners of Billingsgate.

But the worst abuse of Toplady was surpassed by the deliberate and studied scurrility of Hill. Rowland Hill, a younger son of an old Shropshire family, had been adopted as a spiritual protégé of Lady Huntingdon, while yet an undergraduate of St. John's College, Cambridge, and for some years thereafter was her

doughty champion. On leaving the university in 1769, he had been disappointed in his plan to take orders; no less than six bishops refused his application for ordination, on the ground of his irregular preaching while in Cambridge. But the pious activities of the young Cambridge undergraduate which the bishops stigmatized as irregular were precisely what recommended him to the favor of the Countess of Huntingdon. Determined that the entrance to a useful career should not be denied to such an earnest young man by episcopal obstinacy, she encouraged him to preach without ordination, opened to him freely her chapel at Bath, and secured for him large audiences in other places in that neighborhood. His eldest brother Richard — who after the death of the father succeeded to the family title of baronet — was also a warm supporter of the Countess, and during the years of controversy from 1769 to 1775, the Calvinistic party had no more vigorous defenders than the brothers Hill. The long and useful career of Rowland Hill must command our respect; but it is impossible to have anything but indignation for the truculence and vulgarity that defaced his early controversial writing.

In the spring of 1768, six students were expelled from St. Edmund's Hall, Oxford, for Methodist doctrines and practice. It was charged that they held illegal conventicles, and preached, though not in orders; that they taught the false doctrine that faith without works is sufficient for salvation, and that there is, therefore, no necessity for good works; and, moreover, that they were illiterate and "incapable of performing the stated duties of the university." The young men were none of them connected with Wesley's societies, but it was

reported, probably with truth, that some or all of them were supported by the Countess of Huntingdon. At all events, that lady was indignant at the action of the university authorities, and five months later opened a college of her own at Trevecca in Wales, where the conscientious exercise of the duties of religion would not expose young men to discipline and penalty. Meantime, her friends took up the cause of the expelled Oxford men. Rowland Hill was still in Cambridge; but his brother Richard issued a pamphlet in which he defended vigorously not only the conduct but the creed which had been disapproved by the Oxford authorities. This called out a reply from Dr. Nowell, Principal of St. Mary's Hall, proving the Calvinist doctrines the young men had taught to be contrary to the standards of the Church of England. The battle was now fairly on, and Toplady rushed bristling into the field with two pamphlets, one a vindication of the Church from Nowell's charge of Arminianism, and the other a stout assertion of the doctrine of absolute predestination, translated from the Latin of Zanchius.[1]

Wesley had always maintained most cordial relations with the Countess of Huntingdon, though perhaps sometimes chafing a little under her superior tone of patronage; but he had for some time past viewed with increasing uneasiness her efforts in bringing together a group of preachers who were known to the world as Methodists, but who had no connection with his societies, and who were being schooled to teach doctrines he

[1] Girolamo Zanchi, 1516–1590, an Italian theologian who was forced to leave Italy because he adopted Protestant doctrines; was for a term a leader in the reformed church in Geneva, and passed the later years of his life as Professor in Heidelberg.

himself most heartily repudiated. He had little inclination for controversy; but he found it impossible to remain altogether quiet under the cool positiveness with which these young preachers — Toplady was not yet thirty — announced doctrines that seemed to him monstrous. He left formal reply mostly to others; but he could not resist the temptation of applying to Toplady the *reductio ad absurdum*. He abridged the translation of Zanchius into a pamphlet of twelve pages, without note or comment, simply adding at the close this paragraph: —

"The sum of all is this: one in twenty (suppose) of mankind are elected; nineteen in twenty are reprobated. The elect shall be saved, do what they will; the reprobate shall be damned, do what they can. Reader, believe this or be damned. Witness my hand.

A— T—."

Toplady was not likely to keep silent under such an arraignment as this. In angry rejoinder he branded Wesley's abridgment as a wilful travesty of his treatise, and the summary paragraph as an attempt to foist upon him a monstrous perversion of the truth. "In almost any other case, a similar forgery would transmit the criminal to Virginia or Maryland, if not to Tyburn." Wesley, he says, is guilty of "Satanic shamelessness," of "acting the ignoble part of a lurking, sly assassin," "uniting the sophistry of a Jesuit with the authority of a pope," of sinking the discussion "to the level of an oyster woman." One might have supposed that some respect for the years of a great religious teacher, his senior by almost half a century, might have restrained somewhat the violence of this young de-

claimer; but it never did. The bitter animosity shown in this pamphlet characterized all his later relations with Wesley, and for the next seven years the *Gospel Magazine*, which he edited, emitted from time to time articles filled with noisome invective to which the only fit reply was pitying or contemptuous silence.

Meantime, there was good reason to think this unbrotherly temper was not the only ill result of the controversy. In particular, the spread of the Antinomian doctrine that good works were not necessary to salvation had a very injurious effect upon the morality of some Methodists. Fletcher declared that "Antinomian principles and practice" were spreading like wildfire in some of the societies. In these circumstances, Wesley felt it necessary at the session of the Conference in 1770 to make a full and explicit statement of his teaching upon the subject of faith and works. The leading theses of this famous declaration, in the quaint form of question and answer in which the Minutes of the Conference were always phrased, were the following: —

"We have leaned too much toward Calvinism. Wherein?

"1. With regard to *man's faithfulness*. Our Lord himself taught us to use this expression; and we ought never to be ashamed of it.

"2. With regard to *working* for *life*. This also our Lord has expressly commanded, as 'Labor,' ἐργάζεσθε, literally, 'work' for the meat that endureth to everlasting life. And, in fact, every believer till he comes to glory, works *for* as well as *from* life.

"3. We have received it as a maxim that 'a man is to do nothing in order to justification.' Nothing can be more false. Whoever desires to find favor with

God should 'cease to do evil and learn to do well.' Whoever repents should do 'works meet for repentance.' And if this is not *in order* to find favor, what does he do them for?

"Review the whole affair: Who of us is now accepted of God? He that now believes in Christ with a loving and obedient heart. Who among those that never heard of Christ? He that feareth God and worketh righteousness according to the light he had. Is this the same with 'he that is sincere'? Nearly, if not quite. Is not this 'Salvation by works'? Not by the *merit* of works, but by works as a *condition*. What have we been disputing about for these thirty years? I am afraid about *words*.

"As to *merit* itself, of which we have been so dreadfully afraid; we are rewarded 'according to our works.' How does this differ from *for the sake of our works?* And how differs this from *secundum merita operum?* Can you split this hair? I doubt I cannot.

"Does not talking of a justified or a sanctified *state* tend to mislead men? Almost naturally leading them to trust in what was done in one moment? Whereas, we are every moment and hour pleasing or displeasing to God 'according to our works,' — according to the whole of our inward tempers and our outward behavior."

This statement threw the Calvinist preachers into consternation. The Countess of Huntingdon, resolved to countenance no such heresy, promptly announced that any one in her college at Trevecca who did not disavow Mr. Wesley's theses must be expelled. As a result she lost her headmaster, Mr. Benson; and Fletcher of Madeley, who had served as president of the college, though not constantly in residence there, also felt it necessary to resign his office. The Countess seems to have thought it possible to bring such a pressure upon

Wesley as would force him to retract his Minutes at the next session of the Conference, which was to be held in Bristol. With this purpose her cousin and agent, the Rev. Walter Shirley, drew up a circular letter and sent it to a large number of his Calvinist friends, urging that as many as possible, both clergy and laity, of those who disapproved Mr. Wesley's "dreadful heresy" should assemble in Bristol during the session of the Conference, and "go in a body to the said Conference to insist on a formal recantation of the said Minutes." In case of a refusal, they were to sign and publish their emphatic protest — a copy of which was enclosed with the letter. This manifesto of the Countess, however, met with no very general response. It was probably evident even to her friends that she had no business with Wesley's Conference, and that, in any case, the attempt to force such a man as John Wesley to retract opinions he had officially announced was hardly likely to succeed. When the time came, it was found that the assembly which was to overawe Wesley and his Conference mustered only eight men, of whom two were young students from Trevecca, and only Shirley had the slightest pretensions to ability or influence. A little disheartened, perhaps, by this feeble promise of support, both the Countess and Shirley addressed conciliatory letters to Wesley on the evening before the Conference met. The Countess protested that she had intended no personal disrespect to him in her action, but "only a degree of zeal against the principles of the Minutes"; while Shirley professed himself ready to apologize for any hasty or offensive expressions in his letter. Wesley, who had written to Lady Huntingdon some six weeks before in a tone of kindly remonstrance,

did not feel it necessary to answer either of these letters; but consented to receive Shirley and his companions at a session of the Conference. The interview proved to be conciliatory. Shirley did not press for any formal recantation, but, after considerable discussion, presented to the Conference for signature a paper containing an admission that the language of the Minutes had not been sufficiently guarded, and defining the obnoxious doctrine in a way that, it was hoped, might be satisfactory to both parties. "No one is a real Christian," so the statement ran, "and consequently cannot be saved, who doeth not good works, yet our works have no part in *meriting* or *purchasing* our salvation." This paper, after some slight changes in its phrasing, Wesley accepted and signed, with fifty-three of his ministers. Shirley professed himself satisfied, and retired from the interview declaring it one of the happiest days of his life.

This attempt at compromise, however, proved rather a new beginning than the end of controversy. Wesley always insisted, and justly, that there was nothing in the declaration he had signed inconsistent with his previous teaching. The Minutes of 1770, he claimed, had only emphasized that side of a doctrine which at the moment needed emphasis. Nor was that need, in his opinion, by any means past. Just before the beginning of the Bristol Conference he had received and sent to the printer a pamphlet by Fletcher explaining and vindicating the obnoxious Minutes. This pamphlet Shirley now requested him to withdraw or suppress; but Wesley declined. He felt he had no right to be silent when his silence would be accounted a tacit assent to the widespread misrepresentation and denun-

ciation of his doctrine. Fletcher's pamphlet was hurried through the press, and published soon after the adjournment of the Conference. It is the first of his well-known "Checks." Shirley, on the other hand, thought, or professed to think, this action a violation of the Compromise implied in the Declaration Wesley and his preachers had signed, and he replied with great bitterness, charging Wesley with sophistry and bad faith. Richard Hill and his brother Rowland, — now out of the University, — Toplady, and a number of smaller men, soon joined full cry in the attack. The controversy that followed we need not trace in detail. It lasted several years, and it was not edifying. Wesley himself took little or no part in it. And it should be said that his principal defenders, Sellon and Fletcher, never descended to the vulgar abuse that too often defiled the pages of their opponents. But no contribution of any permanent value to the age-long argument was made by either side, unless we are to except the series of papers by Fletcher, commonly known as "Checks to Antinomianism." These in their collected form have been ever since regarded as one of the standards of Methodist doctrine. Fletcher was a clear and facile writer, with a talent for debate and a knack of telling illustration and example. His gentle temper could not be betrayed into harshness or scurrility; but he was master of a quiet irony, all the more effective that it was never angry or acrimonious. It may be admitted that he by no means said the last word on the insoluble problem he was discussing; indeed, perhaps he hardly perceived its profoundest difficulties. But he gave a satisfactory reply to the crude and morally repulsive form of Calvinism urged by his opponents.

It was the best result — perhaps it was the only good result — of the whole controversy that it committed Wesleyan Methodism definitely and unalterably to an Arminian theology. And it will not be denied that to the influence of Wesleyan Methodism, on both sides the Atlantic, is due in no small degree the almost universal abandonment of that merciless logic which reads in the will of God the denial of the human will, and the absolute, irrevocable doom before their birth of a great majority of the human race. It is the demand of ultimate reason that we should insist, at cost of whatever logical inconsistency, upon a God of justice and of love. Only such a God can men love and worship.

But it cannot be too often repeated that Wesley's temper was not controversial. He claimed the privilege of teaching what he deemed the truth, and sometimes, therefore, felt it necessary to answer perversions or misrepresentations of his teaching. He also expected, very justly, that his preachers, for whose teaching he was responsible, should not inculcate doctrines at open variance with his own. But he never made the acceptance of his own opinions the test of a Christian life. He did not even attempt to impose his doctrines upon his own societies. Calvinists and Arminians were welcomed there, if they could unite in Christian sympathy and labor. Given the central force of a religious life manifesting itself in devout and beneficent activity, and he asked no more. From first to last, no other condition of membership was required. As early as 1742, Wesley wrote: "The distinguishing marks of a Methodist are not his opinions of any sort. His assenting to this or that scheme of religion, his embracing any particular set of notions, his espousing the

judgment of one man or another, are all quite wide of the point. Whoever, therefore, imagines that a Methodist is a man of such or such an opinion is grossly ignorant of the whole affair. . . . Is thy heart right, as my heart is with thine? I ask no further question. If it be, give me thy hand. Dost thou love and serve God? It is enough. I give thee the right hand of fellowship." [1]

And more than forty years later, at the very end of his life, he reaffirms the same position even more explicitly: —

"One circumstance more is quite peculiar to the people called Methodists; that is, the terms upon which any person may be admitted to their society. They do not impose, in order to their admission, any opinions whatsoever. Let them hold particular or general redemption, absolute or conditional decrees; let them be Churchmen or Dissenters, Presbyterians or Independents, it is no obstacle. Let them choose one mode of baptism or another; it is no bar to their admission. The Presbyterian may be a Presbyterian still; the Independent or Anabaptist use his own mode of worship. So may the Quaker; and none will contend with him about it. They think, and let think. One condition and one only, is required — a real desire to save their soul. Where this is, it is enough; they desire no more; they lay stress upon nothing else; they ask only, 'Is thy heart herein as my heart? If it be, give me thy hand.' Is there any other society in Great Britain or Ireland that is so remote from bigotry? That is so truly of a catholic spirit? So ready to admit all serious persons without distinction? Where then is there such

[1] "The Character of a Methodist," 1742.

another society in Europe? In the habitable world? I know none. Let any man show it me that can." [1]

Over and over again, throughout his whole career, he expresses this hearty tolerance of opinions at variance with his own, whenever they do not prove inconsistent with a genuinely religious life. "I am sick of opinions," he says in his "Further Appeal to Men of Reason," 1745; "let my soul be with Christians wherever they be, and of whatsoever opinion they be of." In a letter to a friend he declares: "'Is a man a believer in Jesus Christ, and is his life suitable to his profession?' are not only the *main*, but the *sole* inquiries I make in order to his admission into our society." [2] Discussing this matter of beliefs before his Conference once he said: "I have no more right to object to a man for holding a different opinion from mine than I have to differ with a man because he wears a wig and I wear my own hair; but if he takes his wig off and shakes the powder in my eyes, I shall consider it my duty to get quit of him as soon as possible." His charity, indeed, extended far outside the limits of strict orthodoxy. In his noble "Letter to a Roman Catholic," 1749, after enumerating the beliefs and purposes they held in common, he continues: —

"Are we not thus far agreed? Let us thank God for this, and receive it as a fresh token of his love. But if God still loveth us, we ought also to love one another. We ought, without this endless jangling about opinions, to provoke one another to love and good works. Let the points wherein we differ stand aside: here are enough wherein we agree, enough to be the

[1] "Thoughts upon a Late Phenomenon," 1788.
[2] Journal, May 14, 1765.

ground of every Christian temper, and of every Christian action."

He printed for Methodists a life of that good Unitarian, Thomas Firmin — a very pious man, he said. The arch-heretics of history, Montanus of the second century, Pelagius of the fifth century, Servetus of the sixteenth century, — he declared that, in his opinion, they were all holy men, who, at the last, with all the good men of the heathen world, Socrates, and Plato, and Trajan, and Marcus Aurelius, would come from the east and the west to sit down in the Kingdom of Heaven. Religious history from the dawn of Christianity to the present day may be searched in vain to find another leader of equal prominence and equal positiveness of personal opinion who showed such genuine liberality as the great founder of Methodism.

Nor was the religious life which Wesley enjoined upon the members of his societies enthusiastic or mystical. The whole Wesleyan movement, despite a contrary opinion widely current then and sometimes heard even now, owed its success very largely to the fact that the type of religion it fostered was thoroughly healthy and practical. The movement, it is true, was not merely or primarily ethical, but rather evangelical; it was distinctively a religious revival. It was inevitable, moreover, that such a movement as the Wesleyan revival should be accompanied by much emotional excitement. It is only by some strong compulsion of soul that men by thousands can be led to turn from long-confirmed habits of vice to a life clean, righteous, devout. And such a passage from moral disease to moral health must often be marked by something of morbid or irregular excitement. But

grant all this, and it may be confidently affirmed that seldom or never has a great popular religious reform, so widespread and so searching, been more free from unwholesome teaching and unwholesome stimulus.

The truth is, Wesley impressed upon his societies his own type of religion, and that type was prëeminently sane and practical. As we have noted in a previous chapter, there is in his Journal, after about 1740, hardly a reference to his own emotions, to what is commonly called personal religious experience. After he had got out from under the influence of the Moravians, he had no patience with anything like mysticism, or quietism, or enthusiasm. The result was that the Wesleyan movement, throughout its whole course, tended to foster the virtues of good citizenship. The condition of membership in the societies was always conduct. Wherever they were formed, it was noticeable not only that they diminished the more flagrant forms of vice, but that they raised the standard of morals throughout the community. Some prevalent forms of crime were almost eradicated. In his earlier visits to Cornwall, for example, Wesley found that nearly all the members of his societies were in the habit of buying and selling goods that had not paid the duty. It was not thought immoral; everybody did it. But Wesley's rule was explicit and peremptory. Meeting his large society at St. Ives, he "found an accursed thing among them; well-nigh one and all bought or sold uncustomed goods. I therefore delayed speaking to any more till I had met them all together. This I did in the evening, and told them plain, either they must put this abomination away, or they would see my face no more." Next day they individually prom-

ised to do so. Making the round of his Cornish societies, some years later, in 1762, he can note in his Journal, "that detestable practice of cheating the King is no more found in our societies." The records of the excise show that, in fact, smuggling had greatly diminished along the Cornish coast. In some of the northern counties the practice died harder. In 1776, Joseph Benson had expelled a smuggler from the Newcastle Society. Wesley wrote him: "You did right. Fear nothing. Begin in the name of God and go through with it. If only six will promise you to sin no more, leave only six. . . . You must, at all events, tear up this evil by the roots."

So, too, the current practice of bribery at elections Wesley denounced as impossible for a Christian man. He published pamphlets against it and distributed them broadcast. "For God's sake," he wrote to his Bristol societies, "for the honor of the Gospel, for your country's sake, for the sake of your own souls, beware of bribery. Before you see me again, the trial will come at the general election for members of parliament. On no account take money or money's worth. Keep yourselves pure. Give, not sell, your vote. Touch not the accursed thing." As early as 1747, he had the satisfaction of knowing that among his Cornish people there were many men who had not only refused to accept money for their votes, but would not even eat or drink at the expense of the candidate for whom they voted. Long before the close of the century, Methodists came to be recognized as the most incorruptible class of voters in the realm.

It has been said by some critics of Methodism that, while Wesley was, indeed, very liberal in the matter of

belief, the rules of conduct he imposed upon his societies were unwisely rigid. He is charged with forbidding innocent recreations and amusements, discouraging as worldly the accomplishments that heighten the charm of society, condemning as culpable luxury indulgence of taste in dress and in the arts of the household, and, in general, fostering an ungenial temper that divorces religion from beauty and shuts out the pious man from much that refines and liberalizes life.

Nor need we deny that there is at least some plausibility in such an arraignment. It may certainly be pardoned to a great religious reformer, if, in his earnestness for the religious welfare of his followers, he is sometimes too careless of their tastes and their pleasures. Wesley doubtless was somewhat deficient in a sense of the range and variety of life. Then, too, his own immense, unremitting industry made him sometimes overexacting in his demands upon others. His ideas of education, for example, were vitiated by an undue dread of idleness. When he founded his boys' school at Kingswood, his first rule was the very bad one that no boy should be allowed any time at all for play. This Kingswood school, in fact, was an example of many things that a boy's school ought not to be. Wesley's idea of discipline led now to intolerable severity and now to insufferable laxity. The absence of all spontaneity, the system of religious forcing that encouraged pronounced emotional "experiences" of repentance and conversion, gave a morbid tone to the life of the school, and resulted in seasons of hysterical excitement followed naturally by periods of reaction against all serious things. Wesley's own kindly manner was always attractive to children, and he was personally

very fond of them, especially in his later years; but it cannot be said his religious treatment of them was always wise. Without children of his own or any real knowledge of childhood, his notions as to the proper discipline for young people was largely derived from his recollection of his mother's parental system; and we have seen that Susannah Wesley's training of her children was not in every instance beyond criticism.

But, granting all this, it must still be urged that those who arraign Wesley's government of his societies as narrow and rigid overlook some of the essential facts in the case. They forget that a large proportion of Wesley's converts, drawn from the lower-middle class of society, had been accustomed to few recreations more refined than the cock-pit and the bull-ring. To people of this class hardly any amusements were accessible that would have been approved by any person careful of the morals of society. And as for matters of dress and other forms of personal expenditure, Wesley well knew that the very first step toward the formation of good taste in such people is to teach them the charm of simplicity. Ostentation is vulgar anywhere; but nowhere is it quite so vulgar as in the garish display of folk just rising out of poverty. He saw that, in thousands of instances, the energy and industry of Methodists were making them rich, and he frequently used to express his apprehensions that the societies might not be proof against the temptations of newly acquired wealth. It was surely the part of wisdom to enjoin upon them both by precept and example the virtue of plain living. Wesley himself was a pattern of careful neatness in all matters of dress. And there was always

a quiet dignity in his manner that commanded respect and imitation. The teaching and example of such a man upon the social conditions of his people could not have been other than liberalizing. In fact the man who exerted the most beneficial influence upon English manners and minor morals at the middle of the eighteenth century was not my Lord Chesterfield or any of his ilk; it was John Wesley.

Nor was Wesley's regard for the interest of the members of his societies confined by any unintelligent pietism. He deserves to be considered one of the earliest advocates of popular education. It was one of his correspondents, a Miss Ball, who started the first Sunday School, fourteen years before Robert Raikes opened his; and it was another Methodist young woman, Miss Cooke, who first suggested to Robert Raikes the idea of his Gloucester School.[1] Wesley from the first warmly seconded the plan. "So many children," he says in his first notice of the schools,[2] "in one parish are restrained from open sin, and taught a little good manners, at least, as well as to read the Bible." This was in 1784; and so rapidly did the idea spread that within three years thereafter the number of children taught in Sunday Schools exceeded two hundred thousand.[3] The largest of the schools were under Methodist direction. In Newcastle, for instance, a school was established in the Orphan House, attended by more than one thousand children. In Bolton, the Methodist Sunday School, opened in 1785, had for about twenty years an average attendance of eighteen hundred. In many schools, as at Bolton, the

[1] Tyerman, III, 415. [2] Journal, July 18, 1784.
[3] Tyerman, III, 500.

boys and girls were carefully trained in music as well as in the elementary branches of learning. Wesley, who was not only an enthusiastic lover of music, but no mean critic, declared that there were in this Bolton School "a hundred such trebles as are not to be found together in any chapel, cathedral, or music room within the four seas," and when the whole chorus of a thousand sang together, "the melody was beyond that of any theatre."

Wesley's services to the cause of popular literature are also worthy of recognition. He positively demanded that his preachers should devote a certain part of their time to methodical reading and study, and warmly encouraged the reading habit in all his societies. And he was at pains to put good reading within their reach. The *Arminian Magazine*, which he established in 1778, was one of the first, as it is the oldest, popular magazine in England. Although intended primarily to inculcate a sound theology, and like all other "magazines" up to the beginning of the nineteenth century — as the name implies — a kind of repository for excerpts, letters, anecdotes, biographical sketches, and other miscellany, it also contained from the start some poetry, notices critical and literary, and other matter calculated to cultivate the taste as well as the piety of its readers. Wesley's own writings, which touched almost all sorts of subjects, and the hymns by himself and his brother Charles, were published in the cheapest possible form that they might be universally circulated among his people. He prepared or abridged treatises on physics, chemistry, medicine, history, rhetoric, politics, selections from standard poetry, to be used as popular handbooks. In 1781, he issued a revised and

somewhat abridged edition of a popular novel he much admired, Brooke's "Fool of Quality." In every way he was anxious that the Methodist movement should foster popular intelligence as well as popular morals.

Nor was Wesley insensible to the higher forms of art. An impassioned lover of music in its nobler forms, he lost no opportunity of listening to it when his busy life would allow. He repeatedly records in the Journal his delight in oratorio.[1] He encouraged the study and practice of music wherever practicable. It was with his sanction that Martin Madan opened his chapel once a year for the performance of oratorio, — an act which Wesley's biographer cannot bring himself to approve,[2] — and Wesley speaks with enthusiasm of hearing "Judith" and "Ruth" given there. Some of the best of Charles Wesley's hymns were set to music by Händel; especially admirable is his setting for that noble lyric —

"Rejoice, the Lord is King."

Wesley himself, with the aid of his brother Charles, selected the music to be sung in his societies; and it was in no small degree owing to the ardent and well-instructed love of these two men for music, that the Methodist movement carried a wave of sacred song all over England. The London home of Charles Wesley was for twenty years a centre of musical culture. His wife was an accomplished musician with a trained and sympathetic voice; his two sons, Charles and Samuel,

[1] 1758, Thursday, Aug. 17. "I went to the Cathedral to hear Mr. Handel's 'Messiah.' I doubt if that congregation was ever so serious at a sermon as they were during this performance. In many parts, especially several of the chorusses, it exceeded my expectation."

[2] Tyerman, II, 499.

were among the most distinguished organists of their time. The elder, Charles, was an especial favorite of George III; the younger, Samuel, won some eminence as a composer, and had almost equal mastery of the organ, harpsichord, and violin; while his son Samuel Sebastian, the well-known organist of Gloucester Cathedral, carried the musical traditions of the Wesley family quite down to the end of the nineteenth century.

From all more questionable forms of popular amusement, doubtless most Methodists scrupulously abstained; but because such amusements were disapproved by Wesley rather than absolutely forbidden. On doubtful matters, his method was not to prescribe or to prohibit, but to leave the decision of such cases where it belongs, with the individual conscience. In an admirable sermon on amusements, characteristically entitled, "The Better Way," after admitting that something might be said for the drama, — he was a lover of dramatic literature in its better forms and advised his preachers to read plays that they might cultivate a natural manner of speech, — he declares that, for himself, he could not go to the theatre nor play at cards; but he adds: "Possibly others can; I am not obliged to pass any sentence on them that are otherwise minded. I leave them to their own Master; to Him let them stand or fall." His successors have not always been so wise.

Supreme devotion to one great purpose almost of necessity implies some withdrawal of attention from less important matters. The successful reformer is often chargeable with some lack of sympathy or proportion in his views of life. But no impartial student of Wesley's career will assert that the type of religious

life he exemplified himself and enjoined upon others was ignorant or illiberal; no one can deny that the Methodist movement, on the whole, tended powerfully to stimulate the intellect and elevate the taste, as well as to promote the piety, of the great mass of the English people.

A man with Wesley's wide and accurate knowledge of social conditions all over the United Kingdom could not fail to be interested in political matters. Throughout his career he kept a watchful eye upon the measures of government, and estimated carefully their influence, both at home and in the colonies. Journeying constantly from one end of England to the other, with frequent visits to Scotland and Wales, crossing the channel to Ireland, as he did, about fifty times, meeting in intimate relations thousands of devoted followers, and receiving the confidence accorded only to a trusted religious leader, he enjoyed better opportunity than any other man in the realm to observe the state of public opinion among the great body of the English people. And few men could have used that opportunity better. For the first thirty years of his public life, it is true, he did not think it needful or wise to declare allegiance to either party, or to take any share in political controversy. By nature and by education he was a Tory. The first principle of his political creed was loyalty to his king and his Church; though, like his father, he found his Toryism no bar to a hearty support of the House of Hanover. At the time of the rising of '45, he stoutly avowed that he loved and honored his Majesty, George Second, "no less than his own father"; and when that insignificant

monarch died, the loyal Wesley wrote in his Journal, "When will England have a better prince!" He always deprecated the rancor of parties, and enjoined upon Methodists the virtues of obedience and quiet. It was natural, therefore, that he should view with alarm the restlessness and the growing distrust of the influence of the Crown which spread through England during the early years of the reign of George III. He did not, or would not, see that the young monarch by his system of what Burke called "the double cabinet" and his efforts to form a subsidized court party, was striving to get all the reins of power into his own hands and practically to nullify constitutional government. The great middle class, to which most Methodists belonged, Wesley saw, with special concern, were being tainted with what he thought false notions of liberty. He recognized the unwisdom of excluding this growing class so entirely from any participation in the government, and he was one of the early advocates of some scheme for the reform of parliamentary representation. But he feared the result of crude and revolutionary ideas as to personal liberty and the warrant of civil government. Such notions were already filtering down through the mass of the English people, fomenting, so Wesley thought, a dangerous discontent with all constituted authority. The Wesleyan movement had been more successful in the towns than in the rural districts; and it was in the towns that this restlessness was most pronounced, — nowhere more turbulent and aggressive than in the three great Methodist centres, London, Bristol, and Newcastle.

Wesley, however, wrote nothing upon political subjects until 1768. Then, in the heats of the Wilkes

agitation, he could keep silence no longer. John Wilkes, it will be remembered, had been condemned for seditious libel four years before, expelled from the Commons, and outlawed. In February of 1768, he returned from France, and in the following April stood for election to Parliament from Middlesex, and was elected by a large majority. A few weeks later, his sentence of outlawry was pronounced illegal on a technicality; but the verdict of blasphemy and seditious libel still rested on him, and in June he was sentenced to imprisonment for twenty-two months. Meantime, popular excitement in London was at fever pitch. It was assumed that Wilkes would be released from his imprisonment to take his seat in the Commons; and when Parliament met, in May, an immense throng surrounded his prison in St. George's Fields, waiting to escort their hero in triumph to Westminster. But a detachment of the Guards had been sent to preserve order; and without any real provocation, they fired on the crowd, killing five or six, and rousing the passions of the mob to fury. The king had determined that Wilkes should not be seated; but in the face of this storm of popular indignation, the Commons hesitated at taking the dangerous step of expelling a member legally elected. They temporized for some time, and finally postponed their decision till the winter session. In the following February, after long and violent discussion, Wilkes was expelled. Twelve days later he was reëlected, and the following day, February 17, was declared incapable of sitting. Protesting against this violation of their rights and the right of Wilkes, the Middlesex electors again put him forward as a candidate, and again elected him, this time by an

enormous majority. The Commons at once declared the election void, and seated the rival candidate who had received but a handful of votes.

Wilkes lost his seat, but he became the idol of the hour, the representative and champion of popular rights. Franklin, who was in England at the time, declared that if George III had had a bad private character and John Wilkes a good one, the latter might have turned the former out of his kingdom. But Wilkes had a notoriously bad character. A gamester, a profligate, and a rake, his private life was an example of all those vices that most shock common decency. In conversation, indeed, he sometimes showed a brilliancy that, on one famous occasion, disarmed the prejudice even of so stout an opponent as Samuel Johnson; but his public utterances were usually in the rancorous tone of the demagogue, and he had little real statesmanlike ability. Had he been given his seat in the Commons, he would probably soon have sunk into deserved obscurity; the action of the government pushed him at once into prominence as the champion and martyr of popular right. For it was justly urged that his character as a man could not annul his claim to the seat to which his constituents had duly elected him. Moreover, it was evidently not for his morals that the king and the court party were determined to punish him, but for his politics. Everybody knew that writings quite as scandalous as his, libels quite as violent, had for years been allowed to pass unnoticed; and if Wilkes had been one of the "king's friends," he might have published what he pleased without calling down upon himself anything worse than pious regrets or expostulations. Thus a curious irony of circumstance forced some of

the purest and wisest English statesmen to support a notorious rake and debauchee, and made his name, for some years, the symbol of civil liberty on both sides the Atlantic.

It was in the summer of 1768, while the decision of Wilkes's case was pending in the Commons, that Wesley published the first edition of his pamphlet, "Free Thoughts on Public Affairs"; the enlarged and revised form found in his collected works was issued in 1770. Wesley might have had special reason for antipathy to Wilkes; the wife of Wilkes, who seems to have borne the brutal treatment of her husband with exemplary patience, was a wealthy Methodist, and a member of one of Wesley's London Societies. But, in fact, Wesley has comparatively little to say on the Wilkes case. Admitting that he cannot approve the violent measures taken on either side relative to the Middlesex election, he defends the exclusion of Wilkes in a clear and succinct argument, and quotes at considerable length from the famous speech of Mansfield in the lords to support his position. But it is evident that he is chiefly concerned over the alarming spread of disloyalty to the person and authority of the Crown. The paper is really an apology for the character and conduct of George III. As was to be expected, it was not very satisfactory. At almost the same moment, another pamphlet, dealing with the same questions, and under a similar title, appeared from the pen of one of the greatest of English statesmen. Edmund Burke published his "Thoughts on the Causes of the Present Discontents" within a few weeks of the issue of the second edition of Wesley's "Free Thoughts." Burke, too, saw with genuine alarm, the universal temper of

disaffection, the decay of obedience, the loss of respect for rank and office, for what, in one of his own fine phrases, he calls "all the solemn plausibilities of the world." But with the insight of the statesman Burke traces these evils to their source in the corrupt and arbitrary system of personal government to which George III had committed himself. Wesley, on the other hand, cannot or will not see anything to condemn in the character or the policy of the king. He contents himself with insisting that George is an intelligent, honest, and pious man. As to the popular agitation against him, it is so unaccountable that he is forced to conclude, "the first and principal spring of the whole commotion is French gold!" Such a charge as this was not likely to soothe the passions of any overardent friends of civil liberty. Nor could they be expected to think Wesley's defence of the king of any value. They were protesting against the arbitrary and unconstitutional measures of the Crown; they were told that their monarch was a good man, who, unlike Mr. Wilkes, read his Bible, feared his God, and loved his wife.

Two years later, the continued and increasing opposition to the Crown, heightened by the scathing invectives of the Junius Letters, called out from Wesley another pamphlet, entitled "Thoughts upon Liberty." In this he inveighs, with greater warmth than in his former paper, against the universal cry for larger liberty. Religious liberty, he claims, Englishmen already enjoy in greater measure than any other people in the world. Civil liberty he defines as "the liberty to enjoy our lives and fortunes in our own way — to use our property, whatever is legally our own, according

to our own choice," and who, he cries, is robbed of this liberty? "Certainly I am not. I pray do not face me down that I am. Do not argue me out of my senses." Of course, the Whig could reply that the liberty which leaves my property and my person in the control of a government that will not seat the representative I have elected, or, having seated him, manages by corrupt influence to silence his voice and stifle his vote, is not civil liberty at all. The truth is, Wesley's ingrained conservatism would not let him see the real question at issue. Justly shocked by the lawlessness and violence on the surface of the popular movement, he failed to recognize the underlying principles which gave that movement significance. The crowd who broke the windows of the ministers, and bawled for liberty, as he saw, really meant license. The insolent Letters of Junius tended to destroy all reverence for authority, while Wilkes was certainly a stained and sorry champion of any good cause. Yet, though little honored by many of its loudest advocates, the foundation principles of representative government were really at stake, and the ultimate outcome of all the agitation was the greater security of life and liberty the world round. On the other hand, we should never overlook the inestimable services rendered to society in times of change by the conservative, who, like Wesley, protests against the hasty generalizations, the violent measures, the irrational hatred of convention, into which the popular movement is always liable to run. If no such cataclysm as the French Revolution was possible in England after 1760, it was largely because of the sentiment of respect for established order which such teaching as Wesley's inculcated.

But Wesley's most famous political pamphlet was called out, two years later, by the troubles in America. He had followed with close attention the course of affairs in the colonies, political as well as religious, ever since his early sojourn in Georgia. Deeply interested in the work of Whitefield in America, he felt it desirable to provide there some system of societies and itinerant preachers like that which had grown up in England. As early as 1769, his Conference sent ministers to New York and Philadelphia. Wesley himself, in the years immediately following 1770, had serious thoughts of visiting America, and doubtless would have done so, had he felt at liberty to leave the work in England for so long an absence. Methodist societies after the Wesleyan pattern were springing up in various parts of the colonies; a Conference of these societies held in Philadelphia, in 1774, reported 2204 members and seven itinerant preachers.

It was inevitable, therefore, that Wesley should view with grave concern the increasing dissatisfaction in America. At first, his sympathies seem to have been largely with the colonists in their grievances against the mother country. Little as he might share the extreme views as to the nature of civil liberty that had been so loudly proclaimed in England and were now echoed as loudly in America, he was ready to admit that the treatment of the colonies had often been very unwise. In his "Free Thoughts on the State of Public Affairs," he had said so explicitly: "I do not defend the measures which have been taken with regard to America; I doubt whether any man can defend them either on the foot of law, equity, or prudence." He claimed only that these obnoxious measures had been

the work of the Granville ministry, and that the king and his present government should not be held responsible for them. Four years later, as the flame of war was bursting out, — just forty-eight hours before the battle of Bunker Hill, — he wrote a very striking letter to the premier, Lord North.[1] He will not argue the question of the American grievances, though he "cannot avoid thinking, if I think at all, that an aggrieved people asked for nothing more than their legal rights, and that in the most modest and inoffensive manner the nature of the thing would allow." But, waiving all questions of right in the case, he expostulates with the minister against the folly of attempting violent measures against America. With almost prophetic foresight, he warns Lord North that not twenty thousand troops, nor treble that number, fighting half-heartedly, three thousand miles away from home and supplies, can ever hope to conquer a nation of enthusiasts for liberty, who think, whether they be right or wrong, that they are contending for their wives, their children, and their homes. He has information directly from his preachers, he tells the premier, that these colonists are not peaceful agriculturists ready to run at the sight of a redcoat or the sound of a musket, but rather hardy frontiersmen with training and discipline that fits them for war, and that they are "terribly united." "For God's sake," he cries in closing, "for the sake of the king, of the Nation, of your lovely family, remember Rehoboam! Remember Philip the Second! Remember King Charles the First!"

This was Wesley's position at the middle of June, 1775. And as late as the end of October, writing to

[1] Tyerman, III, 197.

one of his American preachers,[1] he declares that if he have an interview with a certain great man, — undoubtedly either Lord North or Lord Dartmouth, — he will urge upon him that "love and tender measures will do far more for America than violence." Yet in the late summer of that same year, he published that famous pamphlet which seems to contradict all his previous utterances on American affairs. The "Calm Address to our American Colonies" is a brief tract of only ten pages, in defence of the English right to tax the colonies without granting them representation. The colonists, Wesley argues, have all the rights enjoyed by British subjects at home, save such as they have voluntarily surrendered by leaving England. As to the claim that the right of representation is implied in that of taxation, that, he urges, has never been recognized in England. Most of the ancestors of the colonists, before they left England, like four-fifths of the English people, never had any vote for a representative in Parliament; yet they were all taxed. They certainly acquired by emigration no rights and no exemptions which they did not enjoy at home. On the contrary, all precedents show that England has always reserved the right to tax her colonists, and has often exercised it. The pamphlet was hardly likely to convince those to whom it was addressed; but it was a terse and vigorous putting of the main arguments by which the ministry justified their American policy. And it was, as the title implied, calm and conciliatory in tone; Wesley claimed with truth that there was not a sharp or bitter word in it.

But Wesley's sudden and apparently inexplicable

[1] Letter to John Rankin, Works, XII, 302.

change of attitude on American affairs naturally provoked surprise and opposition. Before his pamphlet had been out a month there were many people, he said, who would be glad to burn it and him together. It is possible, indeed, to make some defence of Wesley's consistency. It may be said that, on the one hand, he had for years been denouncing the new doctrines of liberty, whether proclaimed by Whigs in England or by Whigs in America; and, on the other hand, he had been convinced that the measures of the Granville ministry had been unwise, and that the decision of the North ministry to resort to force was worse than unwise. He could not heartily defend either the government for enforcing its rights or the colonists for resisting them. In similar circumstances, Christian men have often solemnly deprecated the undue haste of their country to enforce, by the cruel penalty of war, claims which, in the abstract, they have admitted to be just.

But while it is possible thus to make a defence of Wesley's consistency, he himself did not try to make it. He admitted at once that the "Calm Address" was at variance with his previous opinions on the American question. His own explanation of the change was very simple; he had read Samuel Johnson's "Taxation no Tyranny." As he put it, in the preface to the second edition of his pamphlet, "As soon as I received new light myself, I judged it my duty to impart it to others." Accordingly, he extracted all the argument from Johnson's tract, simplified its ponderous phrase, omitted all its abuse, and printed it thus abridged and altered as his own. Whether he first obtained the great man's permission before thus popularizing his pamphlet, is not known; but, in any case, Johnson

was so far from making any complaint, that he declared himself flattered by so able a convert, and likened himself to the philosopher who was content to have all his audience leave him if only Plato stayed. And, in fact, if Johnson cared more for his cause than his fame, he might well be glad of such an auxiliary; for Wesley's little tract probably reached a hundred readers where Johnson's labored and magisterial discussion reached one. Moreover, while neither pamphlet had any effect in America, Wesley's readers in England were mostly of just that great unrepresented middle class whose growing discontent with the government it was most needful, at that time, to allay. Before it had been issued three months, over fifty thousand copies had been sold, and its effect, Wesley declared, exceeded his most sanguine hopes.

But while the "Calm Address" was the most effective of Wesley's political pamphlets, it is probable that his own mixed and changing feelings with reference to the American war may be seen best in two other papers written in the course of the next two years. The "Seasonable Address to the Inhabitants of Great Britain," issued early in 1776, was prompted by his horror at the fratricidal strife in America and the virulent passions it excited at home. The justice of the quarrel he will not discuss. The question at issue, in any case, he says, is a purely constitutional one, difficult of decision, and calling for calm and reasoned consideration. Yet over this delicate question, countrymen, children of the same parents, are arrayed in arms against each other, "murdering each other with all possible speed" to determine which is in the right in a dispute over the method of taxation! And at home in

England, men of all parties, instead of seeking the things that make for peace, are fomenting the quarrel by angry discussion of matters they cannot understand. The paper is a plea for a moderate, conciliatory temper, and for humility and penitence in view of the sins of the nation.

But in the pamphlet of the next year, "A Calm Address to the Inhabitants of England," issued in February, 1777, Wesley's temper has changed. Since his previous writing the Americans had thrown off allegiance to the mother country, and declared their independence. Plainly, conciliation or compromise was no longer possible. The struggle must go on till it end in victory for one party or the other. In these circumstances, Wesley finds no attitude possible to a loyal Englishman but steady support of the government. The factious Englishmen who defend the cause of rebellion, and, if they do not plead openly for the Americans, extenuate their crimes and speak of them with tenderness, should now remember their duty not only to fear God but to honor the king. If there be any such disloyal subjects among the people called Methodists, Wesley avers — with great plainness of speech — that he would no more continue in fellowship with them than with common swearers, drunkards, thieves, or whoremongers. As for the colonists, he now thinks that independence has from the first been their object. They have set up a government founded on a false idea of liberty; but in fact no freedom of action or of speech is allowed among them. Their military success in the first two years of the war was alarming; but since King George proclaimed a general fast, the tide has turned. General Howe has occupied

Long Island and New York, and the rebel cause grows desperate.

The whole pamphlet is as stout a partisan document as Lord North could desire. Wesley had evidently become convinced that an energetic prosecution of the war was now the shortest path to peace. Always a stanch defender of the monarchy, he never had any sympathy with the opposition of Burke and Fox, and now deemed their attitude little short of treasonable. It is possible, too, that the vicious attacks made upon him for his "Calm Address" to the colonists — though he would not condescend to answer them — may have embittered somewhat the tone of this paper. He had been branded as a turncoat, a Jesuit, a wolf in sheep's clothing, a sycophant, a hypocrite with one eye on heaven and the other on a pension, a priest who ought to be presented not with lawn sleeves but with a hempen collar. And some of the worst of these charges came from the Calvinistic Methodists, most of whom seem to have leaned toward the American side in the controversy. Their organ, the *Gospel Magazine*, poured out a torrent of abuse, and Toplady, its editor, fairly outdid himself in a scurrilous pamphlet which he called "An Old Fox Tarred and Feathered." Always insisting that it was the first duty of a good Methodist to be a good citizen, it is not surprising that Wesley resented keenly these charges of time-serving and hypocrisy from Methodists who, as he said, "hated the king and his ministers only less than they hated an Arminian."

The verdict of the impartial historian must be that, throughout the American controversy, Wesley was on the wrong side, and lent his influence to the oppo-

nents of constitutional liberty rather than to its friends. But it would be absurd to impute his conduct to selfish motives. And if his early sympathies with the colonists seem to have been too easily withdrawn by Johnson's pamphlet, we must remember that he was strongly predisposed to the conservative side not only by his inherited temper of loyalty to the Crown, but by his abhorrence for the excesses and license that during the previous ten years had attended the liberal party in England. Perhaps, indeed, he was not quite so much influenced by Johnson as he himself thought he was. He was by native disposition the friend of order rather than of freedom, and always looked with suspicion upon the clamor for the extension of popular rights. In his opinion, law, virtue, and religion had good reason to dread that sort of liberty with which was always linked the name of John Wilkes. Yet this was the liberty the Americans had now enthroned. Whatever he may have thought of some of their grievances in 1774, the course of events in America through the next two years convinced him that the revolutionary temper dominant there was inconsistent with a well-ordered, quiet, religious state. Fortunately, he lived long enough to see his mistake. He accepted in good faith the result of the struggle, and when it was over, resumed at once the most cordial relations with the Methodists of the new republic, and soon granted to them a measure of ecclesiastical self-government which he was never quite ready to accord to his societies in England.

The needs of the Methodists in America after the close of the Revolution were only one of the causes

which forced the attention of Wesley, as he drew near the close of life, upon the question — what was to become of Methodism after he was gone. Thus far, as we have seen, the whole elaborate system of organization and government which had grown up through forty years centred in Wesley himself. The reins of authority were all in his hands. The societies through their leaders and pastors were responsible to him. The preachers were appointed and approved by him; they met each year for "Conference" with him. The Methodist chapels, or preaching houses, of which by 1784 there were in the United Kingdom as many as 359, were held, under a form he had devised, by local trustees "for the use of John Wesley and such other persons as he might appoint to preach therein." After his death, this right to appoint preachers was to vest in his brother Charles, or in the case of the death of both brothers, in William Grimshaw, should he survive them. After the death of all three of these clergymen, the chapels were to be held "for the sole use of such persons as might be appointed by the yearly Conference of the people called Methodists." But this Conference had no legal status, being merely a private meeting called by Wesley; it was without power to acquire or to hold property, and at the death of Wesley might cease to exist altogether. Indeed, it seemed possible that at the death of its founder the whole structure of Methodism might drop to pieces. It was plainly necessary that some measures should be taken to hold the societies together under a permanent organization and to secure the ownership and control of Methodist property, when the personal government of Wesley should be terminated by his

death. Wesley therefore drew up a document naming one hundred of his preachers as permanent members of the Conference with authority to fill vacancies in their body, and defining clearly their powers and duties. This "Deed of Declaration" was enrolled in the Court of Chancery, and the "Conference" constituted was thus given a permanent legal existence. It was thenceforth impossible for the property of the societies to revert to private use, or for the societies themselves to fall apart and become mere separate congregations. By this one step, Methodism was guaranteed a perpetual organization and polity.

The condition of the Methodist societies in America made Wesley deem it necessary to take another step which was by far the most serious departure from ecclesiastical order he had yet ventured. When the Revolution began, there were in the colonies six preachers sent by Wesley from England; but when the rupture with the mother country was complete and the colonies declared their independence, all but one of these preachers felt it their duty to return to England. Francis Asbury alone remained. No more heroic figure is to be found in early American history than this plain Methodist preacher. He came of hardy stock. His father was an intelligent farmer and gardener in Handsworth, Staffordshire; his mother was a woman of unusual depth and sensitiveness of nature, with an almost passionate love for books and reading. Under the training of such parents, young Asbury grew up a clean, earnest lad, and in his early teens, influenced especially by a minister — not a Methodist — who was staying at his father's house, he began a distinctively religious life.

Handsworth is not far from Wednesbury, where, it will be remembered, the Methodists had suffered such violent persecution. Asbury naturally asked his mother who and what sort of people these Methodists were, and learning from the good woman that they were pious and peaceable folk, he went to Wednesbury to see them. Here he found, to his surprise, a kind of preaching and a type of religious experience different from anything he had before known. These devout, cheerful Methodists seemed to him to embody the ideal Christian character. He came home to hold meetings like theirs in his own village and, when driven from other places, in his father's house. When he was eighteen he began to preach, and four years later was enrolled as one of Wesley's itinerants. Deeply religious, yet without a trace of fanaticism; with the instinct of command, yet not domineering or arrogant; rigidly methodical in his habits, yet easy and affable in manner; thoughtful and studious, yet keenly sagacious in practical affairs — he possessed just that combination of qualities which John Wesley most admired. He had been profoundly impressed by the religious needs of the colonies, and when, at the Conference of 1771, Wesley called for volunteers for America, Asbury promptly offered himself, and sailed in the following September. He well knew himself to be entering upon a career of exile and hardship, and he had some misgivings as to his own fitness for the work. But he wrote in his Journal, "If God does not acknowledge me in America, I will soon return to England." He was never to see England or home again. The next year, 1772, he was appointed by Wesley superintendent of

all the itinerants in America, and, although superseded in that position by another for a short time, he was for the next twenty years the director of Wesley's work, the real founder of American Methodism.

At the outbreak of the war, Asbury was in much uncertainty as to what he ought to do. He early foresaw the probable issue of the struggle, and hesitated to desert the people with whose interests he had become so closely identified. On the other hand, his early associations, his memories, his love for his home and the aged mother to whom he was tenderly attached, all drew him strongly toward England. Moreover, he knew that Wesley himself did not heartily approve the cause of the colonists, and had advised all the American preachers to observe a strict neutrality that, at such a time, was almost impossible. All his colleagues from England decided that their position in America was no longer practicable. But Asbury could not bring himself to leave the three thousand Methodists of America. He resolved to stay and preserve Wesley's discipline and teaching among the little societies of Methodists scattered through the country. It is impossible to overestimate the importance of that decision. For the next ten years, Asbury held American Methodism together. In toils and danger his record matches that of Wesley himself. He was always in the saddle, journeying up and down the country, twice a year, from Connecticut to the Carolinas. Now he is preaching in Philadelphia or Richmond, and next month he is pushing his way through almost pathless woods up the farther slopes of the Alleghanies, fording mountain streams, or riding through lonesome valleys on the outmost

frontiers of civilization. In one period of ten months, he estimated that he had ridden over four thousand miles on horseback, over the worst possible roads, and had preached on an average one sermon a day. His difficulties were, of course, vastly increased by the war. Most of the American Methodists were patriots, yet their relations with Wesley and England brought them everywhere into suspicion; in a few instances imprudent expressions of loyalty to the mother country may have justified such suspicion. In a period of intense partisan feeling, Asbury's attitude of neutrality was naturally interpreted as indifference or hostility to the popular cause. The oath of allegiance very generally imposed upon those whose patriotism was in doubt he could not conscientiously take, because it contained a promise of willingness to take up arms against England, if required to do so. As a result, he found himself an object of suspicion, and in the larger towns was several times in personal danger from mob violence. In Annapolis, a shot barely missed him, passing through the chaise in which he was riding. Through the greater part of two years, he was obliged to confine his labors to the state of Delaware, and for some weeks in the spring of 1778 was in close concealment in the house of a prominent citizen of Dover. By the end of the following year, however, he was allowed to resume his travels; and as he came to be more widely known, his devotion and self-sacrifice, his intelligence and the dignified charm of his personality, won him friends among high and low. Before the close of the war he was universally respected as a citizen and a Christian minister.

As a result of the tireless labors of Asbury during the period of the Revolution, Methodism in America, so far from declining, greatly increased. At the close of the war, it was estimated that there were in the new republic as many as fifteen thousand Methodists, and eighty-four itinerant preachers. Besides these itinerants, there were a goodly number of "local preachers," who were carrying Methodism into the outskirts of civilization which as yet no regular preacher had reached. And Asbury's strict notions of discipline had kept all these American Methodists true to Wesley's doctrine and polity. They were gathered into societies and classes formed after Wesley's pattern and governed by Wesley's rules. Their lay itinerant preachers travelled circuits assigned to them at "Conferences" held annually. But now that the country had definitely separated from England, the tie that bound them to the English societies was felt to be somewhat weakened. And what was of much more importance, among all these Methodists, there was not a single ordained priest who could minister to them the sacraments of the Church. Their children could not be baptized; indeed, many of the members of the societies had themselves never been baptized. There was no one to administer the sacrament of the Lord's Supper. Before the war, the Methodists had been theoretically members of the English Church, and depended mostly upon the English clergy in America for the rites of the Church. But the English Church no longer existed in America. Throughout those states in the South where the Methodist societies were most numerous, the learning and piety of the English clergy had sunk to a very low ebb before the war;

now the clergy had mostly left the country, and their church edifices were, in many instances, falling into ruin. In these circumstances, the Methodists had for some years urgently demanded that their preachers should assume the power to administer the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper; at a Conference in 1779, representing most of the societies south of Philadelphia, the preachers assembled decided that it was necessary to do so. But the influence of Asbury, always fearful of any irregularity, induced them to hold the matter in suspense till the advice of Wesley could be had; and when, next year, Wesley by letter dissuaded them from any such irregularity, they consented to allow the matter to remain for the present without action. But Wesley himself now saw that his American societies could not much longer be left without some form of ecclesiastical government, and without the most sacred rites of religion. He had twice entreated the Bishop of London to ordain one of the Wesleyan preachers who might visit the American societies; but the bishop declined. Wesley felt himself confronted with the alternative either of leaving these societies in their desolate state to schism and disintegration, or of providing them with some form of discipline and ministration, even at the risk of violating ecclesiastical usage. Letters from America were beseeching his assistance. Fletcher, his most trusted adviser, urged him to accede to their request. After long and careful deliberation, he made up his mind. He preferred the episcopal form of government; but he had long been convinced that there is no difference in orders between bishop and presbyter. On this conviction he now decided

to act. He selected his ablest preacher, Dr. Thomas Coke, an Oxford graduate and an ordained presbyter, and determined to send him to America with some extraordinary powers. Coke, who was an ambitious man, professed some hesitation at what he characterized as "a measure so unprecedented in modern days," but after considering it for two months, consented to go, on condition that Wesley, "by the imposition of his hands," should give him the "power of ordaining others." [1] At the summons of Wesley he came up to Bristol, with two lay preachers, Richard Whatcoat and Thomas Vasey; and on the 20th of September, 1780, in his private room, Wesley set apart the two lay preachers as presbyters, and laying his hands upon Coke, "set him apart to the office of Superintendent of the societies in America." Coke was to proceed to America, and there, in the same way, ordain Francis Asbury, first as deacon, then as presbyter, and then as Associate Superintendent of the work in America. Coke reached America early in November, and a Conference of all the preachers was called to meet in Baltimore during Christmas week. Asbury, sympathizing with the democratic temper of the American societies, declined to be ordained Superintendent unless first elected to the position by his fellow-preachers. The Conference, however, at once satisfied that condition by electing both Coke and Asbury; after which Coke, with the assistance of the presbyters Whatcoat and Vasey, solemnly set apart the heroic preacher as Associate Superintendent, with himself, of all the American societies. On the following day, twelve of the preachers nomi-

[1] Letter to Wesley, August 9, 1784; Tyerman, III, 429.

nated by the Superintendents and elected by the Conference, were ordained as deacons and then as presbyters or elders. Thus were laid the foundations of the Methodist Episcopal Church.

No act of Wesley's has been so warmly criticised as this ordination of Coke. For all his previous deviations from ecclesiastical usage, his societies, his class meetings, his field preaching, his lay preachers, he might have pleaded precedents from the early ages of the Church. He had sometimes, it is true, strained rather severely his own obligations to his ecclesiastical superiors; but he claimed that he had done nothing in violation of a sound, though rather broad, churchmanship. But for this action it was more difficult to find precedent or authority. His brother Charles, to whom Wesley had not disclosed his intention, was appalled. The American ordinations seemed to him the first long step toward "a schism as causeless and unprovoked as the American rebellion." He could hardly bring himself to believe that his brother, after a long life of love and reverence for his Church, at the very end of his career, in the eighty-second year of his age, should, with a cautious secrecy, assume the episcopal functions, ordain elders, and consecrate a bishop! Nothing, he averred, should now separate him from the brother he had taken for better and for worse till death should them part; but he grieved that he had lived long enough to see that evil day. The American Methodists were, he admitted, in urgent need; but had they been patient but a very little longer, they might have seen in their new country a properly consecrated bishop, and have been kept, like the societies at home, in loving com-

munion with the English Church. Now, they were nothing more or less than separatists and dissenters.

Doubtless Charles Wesley was right in the logic of his position. From a churchman's point of view, orders conferred by John Wesley could have no validity. Wesley himself, as early as 1746, after reading the rather crass and immature work of Lord King "On the Constitution of the Primitive Church," had accepted King's conclusion that there is no difference in orders between bishop and presbyter; and he had repeated that opinion, with more or less positiveness, at various times since that year. He now wrote to Charles, "I firmly believe I am a scriptural *episcopos* as much as any man in England, for the uninterrupted succession I know to be a fable that no man can prove." Yet during the forty years in which he had held this view, he had never ventured to act upon it. Many of the English Methodists would gladly have received the sacraments at the hands of their itinerant lay preachers rather than from an indifferent or hostile parish priest; but Wesley had declared that for an unordained preacher to administer within his societies was "a sin which he dare not tolerate," while yet he seems never to have thought of ordaining any of his lay preachers. His action in the case of Coke is still more difficult to reconcile with any notions of churchmanship. By his own theory, both Coke and himself were of the same order, and if there be no difference in order between presbyter and bishop, neither one of these two presbyters could confer upon the other any authority beyond what both already possessed. It is true that Wesley was careful to avoid the word "ordain" in speaking of his action, and he

was irritated at hearing that Coke and Asbury soon allowed themselves to be called "bishops." But he had solemnly "set apart by the imposition of my hands" Coke to exercise ecclesiastical functions permitted to no other presbyters. Some years before he had "appointed" Asbury "Superintendent" of the work in America; but that appointment carried with it no episcopal or even priestly functions. Now it was distinctly understood that Coke and Asbury were to be "set apart" in order to give to the American societies an episcopal form of government; and Wesley made no objection to the title which the Conference in America at once assumed, the "Methodist Episcopal Church in America." And whatever may have been his theoretical opinions as to the nature of the episcopal office, it is hard to believe that so clear a thinker as Wesley could have been blind to the practical conclusions that might logically have been drawn from his action. If any presbyter of the Church of England, for what seemed to him good and sufficient reasons, could invite into his back parlor another presbyter and there solemnly "set him apart" for the work — if not for the office — of a bishop, then ecclesiastical discipline within the Church of England was plainly at an end.

It is best to admit frankly that Wesley's conduct, however described, was inconsistent with any strict churchmanship, and to be defended only by those who consider forms of church constitution and government to be matters of expediency, and not of universal obligation. To those who so believe, it will be sufficient to say that Wesley was fully justified in breaking with usage and discipline when convinced

that only so could the religious welfare of great numbers of his fellow-men be conserved. That is the opinion of the vast majority of Methodists to-day, on both sides the Atlantic; that will probably be the verdict of the impartial historian in the future.

Doubtless this first great departure from strict churchmanship made the next more easy. The Methodists in Scotland thought themselves subject to privations almost equal to those suffered by their brothers in America. There was, it is true, a branch of the English Church in Scotland; but for more than a hundred years it had been regarded by the mass of the Scottish people with marked aversion, as little better than a relic of popery. The Methodists over the Tweed generally shared this prejudice; while, in turn, the Anglican clergy there regarded them with contempt, and in many instances refused them the sacraments unless they would renounce Methodist doctrine and discipline. It was natural, therefore, that the demand for ordained Methodist preachers should be specially urgent in Scotland. To this demand Wesley now acceded, and in 1785 set apart three of his preachers to minister in Scotland. He would seem to have taken this step with hesitation and perhaps against his own better judgment; at all events, in his Journal he says that he yielded to the pressure of his advisers. In the next two years seven more of his lay preachers were thus given power to administer the rites of the Church in Scotland. But only in Scotland. The moment these ministers crossed the border into England they subsided into plain lay preachers. When one of them, after a period of service in Scotland, returned to take an English circuit,

Wesley insisted that he doff his gown and bands and lay aside the title of Reverend. It is true that in 1789 he seems to have ordained three of his lay preachers without assigning them, as he had all those previously ordained, to Scotland or the West Indies. Yet it is not quite certain that he expected these three to exercise their clerical functions in England: it seems probable that they did not do so during his lifetime.

As Methodism developed a more highly organized form, it must have been increasingly evident, even to Wesley himself, that there would be difficulty in confining it within the usages and sanction of the Establishment. A complete system of worship and discipline had grown up under his direction, with methods and offices unknown to the English Church of his time. A large number of men not in orders were preaching by the authority and under the direction of a single clergyman, a Fellow of Lincoln College, and owning responsibility to no other ecclesiastical superior. The buildings which many of the societies had erected could be licensed as places of worship only under the Toleration Act — an act framed solely for the benefit of Dissenters. The members of the societies generally felt that they were only half welcome in church. They chafed under the rule that their chapels, to them the most sacred places of worship, must always be closed during the hours of church service. Many of them thought it a hardship that the sacraments of their faith could be ministered to them only at the hands of the parish clergy who regarded them too often with bitter prejudice; and they not unnaturally desired that the men who were their pastors and teachers should also be their priests.

The truth is that the Wesleyan movement in forty years had assumed such proportions and elaborated such a separate organization as to make permanent inclusion in the Establishment impossible. Had the earlier attitude of the clergy been more intelligent and liberal, the Church might perhaps have retained within its pale, not only Wesley but his followers; but it was now too late. This conviction must have forced itself sometimes upon Wesley; but he was unwilling to admit it. It was only with great reluctance that he made any concessions to the spirit of separation, or relaxed any of those regulations by which he had thought to bind Methodists to the Church. At the Conference of 1786, he consented, in response to numerous requests, that service might be held in Methodist chapels at the same hours as in church, but only where the parish minister was a notoriously wicked man or preached clearly pernicious doctrine, or when the churches in the town were not sufficient to contain half the people, or when there was no church at all within two or three miles of the chapel. But the next year, he declared that this permission, even when so closely hedged about, had probably done no good anywhere in England; and when, in 1789, Coke — who had returned from America — ventured to hold service in the largest Methodist chapel in Dublin during church hours, Wesley was deeply disturbed, and gave a reluctant assent to the innovation only on condition that the chapel should be closed on all Communion days. As he drew near the close of life, the ritual, the offices, the traditions of the English Church, endeared by long memory and association, grew more sacred to

him. He was pained at every indication of dissent. Visiting one day in 1788 a new chapel in Glasgow, he notes that it is as large and commodious as his favorite preaching place in Bath, yet adds, with a tinge of foreboding, "But oh, the difference! It has the pulpit on one side, and exactly the look of a Presbyterian meeting house. Perhaps an omen of what will be when I am gone." He had certainly allowed himself larger liberty within the Establishment than it was easy to defend, and had pained his brother Charles by acts that really meant separation; yet, for himself, he always protested that he would never leave the Church, nor countenance any one else in doing so. In a letter to the *Dublin Chronicle* three years before his death, he declared, "Unless I see more reasons for it than I ever yet saw, I will not leave the Church of England as by law established, while the breath of God is in my nostrils." And over and over again, with all publicity, he repeated that statement during his latest years. He could not be blind to the indications that, after death, many Methodists would sever a connection that had already become only nominal; yet to the last he seems to have persuaded himself that such separation would be only partial and temporary. He would not think that the great volume of religious experience and influence which it had been the work of his life to generate was to pass outside the Church altogether. His own hopes and fears and wishes are pathetically blended in the oft-quoted valedictory paper which he printed in the *Arminian Magazine* less than a year before his death:—

"I never had any design of separating from the Church. I have no such design now. I do not be-

lieve the Methodists in general design it, when I am no more seen. I do, and will do, all that is in my power to prevent such an event. Nevertheless, in spite of all that I can do, many of them will separate from it (although, I am apt to think, not one-half, perhaps not one-third of them). These will be so bold and injudicious as to form a separate party, which, consequently, will dwindle away into a dry, dull, separate party. In flat opposition to these, I declare once more, that I live and die a member of the Church of England; and that none who regard my judgment or advice will ever separate from it."

The prediction in this passage is a proof of Wesley's abiding love and loyalty for his Church; it is a proof also of his inability adequately to appreciate the magnitude and permanence of the religious movement that bears his name.

CHAPTER VIII

THE CLOSING YEARS

WESLEY'S last years were blessed with —

> "All that should accompany old age,
> As honor, love, obedience, troops of friends."

Active opposition to his work had entirely ceased. His life of devotion to the highest good of man had won the respect of all who knew his name, and the reverent love of thousands who called themselves his friends. In his journeyings during these later years, it often happened that a company of his friends would follow him out from one town, walking beside the carriage, till they met a similar company approaching to welcome him from the next town. On his last visit to Ireland, a year and a half before his death, that warm-hearted people, rich and poor alike, flocked to hear him, with warmest demonstrations of affection. The Journal for those months contains frequent touching records of his partings with families who felt they were seeing him for the last time.

"A more affectionate family than Mr. McCarty's I have not found in the Kingdom. This appeared more particularly in the morning. When we were talking together, one and another fell on their knees all around me, and most of them burst into tears and earnest cries, the like of which I have seldom heard: so that we scarce knew how to part."[1]

[1] May 26, 1789.

"I lodged at T. Briscoe's: a lovely family indeed: just such another as Miss B.'s at Keynsham. . . . When I took my leave of the family they came all in tears. It is long since I saw the like."[1]

When he was to sail back to England, a great multitude followed him to the ship, crowding about him with tears to press his hand, while many fell on his neck and kissed him. Wesley sang a parting hymn with them, and kneeling on the pier in the centre of the sorrowing company, prayed for God's blessing on them, their families, Ireland, and the Church. Then stepping on board, as the ship slowly drew away, the venerable man remained standing on deck, his hands lifted in benediction over the weeping throng who were to see his face no more. His last visit to Cornwall, in the same year, was accompanied by similar scenes. In Falmouth where, forty years before, he was taken prisoner by a howling mob and escaped by what seemed a marvellous chance, he now found the street where he passed lined from one end of the town to the other by "high and low, out of stark love and kindness, gaping and staring as if the King were going by." In the evening he preached on a little hill outside the town to an immense crowd, and going on thence to Redruth, preached the following Sunday in the vast natural amphitheatre of Gwennap, to an audience of over twenty-five thousand. No wonder the old man of eighty-six thought it "hardly possible that all should hear."

He was now generally welcome in the churches, and spoke in many pulpits that, in the early days, had been indignantly closed against him. In the last year of his life he writes in the Journal that he has preached in

[1] July 14, 1789.

Great St. Helen's, London, to a large congregation, and he adds, "It is, I believe, fifty years since I preached there before. What hath God wrought since that time!" In fact, he had not preached there since that May evening in 1738 when his "heart was so enlarged to declare the love of God" that he did not wonder at the sentence of the formal rector, "Sir, you must preach here no more." Many of his warmest opponents he now found ready to admit the nobility of his purpose and the charm of his conversation, and quite willing to accept his friendship if not his opinions. While in Cork, in the summer of 1787, — where he was most hospitably entertained by the mayor, — he was invited by a prominent gentleman to breakfast "with my old antagonist, Father O'Leary," a Roman Catholic priest with whom he had been in warm controversy seven years before over the Catholic Emancipation Question. "I was not at all displeased," says Wesley, "at being disappointed. He is not the stiff, queer man that I expected; but of an easy, genteel carriage, and seems not to be wanting either in sense or learning." It is probably safe to say that Father O'Leary was also pleasantly disappointed in Wesley.

For Wesley's temper grew more mellow and genial quite to the end of his life. He never showed anything of the querulousness or prejudice, the habit of insistent reminiscence, that sometimes lessen the charm of age. His conversation in his latest years was even more vivacious and wide-ranging than in early life. He retained in increased degree all his liking for books, for music, for really good society. In particular his love for natural scenery deepened in his old age. He had passed most of his life in the open air, and his sense of the beauty of

the world was never so keen as in his very last years. He has an excellent gift of summary description, and the later pages of the Journal are brightened by many beguiling glimpses of the scenes through which he travels, or in which he stands to preach. On one day he speaks in a "most pleasing place, shaded with tall, spreading trees, near which ran a clear river." At another time he is riding through an Irish valley, "pleasant beyond description. At a very small distance on the left hand the river 'rolled its sinuous train,' beyond which were shady trees, covering a steep hill, and rising row above row. On the right hand we had another sloping mountain, tufted over with trees, sometimes forming one green, even wall, sometimes scattered up and down, and between them several beautiful seats." In the summer of 1783, he made a brief visit to Holland, and speaks with enthusiasm of the rich and cultivated charm of that fertile land. "I never saw such a country before; I suppose there is no such summer country in Europe. From Amsterdam to Mere, it is all a train of most delightful gardens." But he adds, a few days later, with an old man's fond recollection of the scenes endeared to his early years, that the gardens and walks in Holland, though extremely pleasant, are "not to be compared with St. John's or Trinity Gardens, much less with the parks, Magdalen Water-Walks, Christ Church Meadows, or the White Walk." One sees by the Journal that on his constant journeyings through England and Scotland he found his choicest — indeed, almost his only — recreation in visiting parks and gardens; the Journal records scores of such visits. Yet he was more profoundly moved by nature in her larger and more untutored forms. His favorite

preaching place was the vast natural amphitheatre of Gwennap, in Cornwall; and on his last visit to Land's End, in his eighty-third year, he insisted upon climbing down the rugged wave-beaten cliff to stand on the wild spot commemorated by his brother Charles in the hymn —

> "Lo, on a narrow neck of land
> 'Twixt two unbounded seas I stand."

But, although the object of universal love and reverence, and retaining all his sense of the healthy joys of life, Wesley felt an old man's loneliness as the friends of earlier years, one after another, were removed by death. Fletcher of Madeley, the best beloved of all his preachers, died in 1785, and left a void in Wesley's heart that no one else could fill. In the same year, Vincent Perronet, Vicar of Shoreham, the "Archbishop of Methodism," ninety-two years of age and for almost half a century friend and adviser of both the Wesleys, dropped peacefully out of life. "I follow hard after," wrote Wesley in the Journal; "O that I may follow him in holiness, and may my last end be like his." The younger men among his preachers, like Coke and Benson and Adam Clarke, though devoted and earnest, could never quite take the place of those who had borne with him the burden and heat of the day. But the heaviest blow of all fell when he was bereft of his brother Charles. Widely different in temperament, the two brothers had often differed sharply in opinion; but nothing could ever estrange them in sympathy. In the later years of his life Charles Wesley had travelled but little, but lived steadily in London, exercising, in the absence of John, a kind of paternal watchfulness over the London societies. His domestic life was very

happy; and the celebrity of his two sons made his house a musical centre in which some of the most famous musicians and most brilliant society of London listened to concerts by the two remarkable young performers. But Charles Wesley's interest in the great mission of Methodism to poor and humble folk never in the slightest degree diminished; he preached and administered the sacrament of the Lord's Supper in the West Street and City Road Chapels as long as his failing strength would allow. It is true that he clung far more tenaciously than John to the usages and traditions of the Church of England. He had been shocked and alarmed, as we have seen, by the countenance John had given to separatist tendencies. The American ordinations; the demand of some of the English preachers to assume ministerial functions; the probability growing, as he knew, into a practical certainty, that after the death of his brother the Methodists would become a dissenting body — these things gave very genuine grief to Charles Wesley in his declining years. He felt, as he wrote a friend in 1785, that the action of John in these matters was likely to "dissolve their partnership." But nothing could dissolve or alter his affection for his brother. "We have taken each other," he wrote John in 1784, "for better, for worse, till death do us part? No; but unite eternally." His health had been failing for two years when, at the beginning of 1788, he became unable to leave his house, and after two months of weakness and exhaustion, the sands of life ran out. He died on the 29th of March. Firm in his churchmanship to the last, he directed that his funeral services should be conducted, not by one of the Methodist preachers, but by the rector of his parish

church, and that his body should be buried, not in the cemetery adjoining the City Road Chapel, but in the consecrated ground of Marylebone Churchyard.

John Wesley had not expected the end so soon, and was absent from London on one of his tours of visitation. It is said that at the very moment of the death of Charles, John was singing with a congregation in Shropshire his brother's noble hymn: —

"Come, let us join our friends above
Who have obtained the prize,
And, on the eagle wings of love,
To joys celestial rise.
Let all the saints terrestrial sing,
With those to glory gone:
For all the servants of our King,
In earth and heaven are one.

"One family we dwell in Him,
One church, above, beneath,
Though now divided by the stream,
The narrow stream of death:
One army of the living God,
To His command we bow,
Part of His host have crossed the flood,
And part are crossing now."

Two weeks later, at Bolton, he gave out that other famous hymn of his brother's: —

"Come, O thou Traveller Unknown,"

but when he came to the lines —

"My company before is gone
And I am left alone with thee,"

he could read no further, but sat down, buried his face in his hands, and burst into sobs and tears. For the widow of Charles he showed a tender and solicitous care; and the affection of the old man for her daughter and namesake, his favorite niece Sally, was very beau-

tiful. But he had now outlived all the friends of his youth. He was as a father to thousands, but he had no more brothers; and in the few remaining years of his life, though always active and cheerful, he felt himself alone.

Occasional references in the Journal betray some slight and gradual decline in Wesley's health during these last years, yet he retained his vigor both of mind and body, in a wonderful degree, almost to the very close of life. In 1786, when eighty-three years old, he records with some regret that he cannot now write more than fifteen hours a day without hurting his eyes. Two years later, when his friends urged him to ride to a preaching place six miles out of Bristol, "I am ashamed," replied this youth of eighty-five, "that any Methodist preacher in tolerable health should make a difficulty of this," and tramped away. On his birthday, that summer, as he enters his eighty-sixth year, he writes that he cannot run or walk quite so fast as once he did, that his sight is a little declining, and he has some twinges of rheumatism; but hearing, smell, taste, and appetite are as good as ever they were; he feels no such thing as weariness in travelling or preaching, and finds that he can write as readily and as correctly as ever. A week before this entry he had breakfasted in York with one of his ministers, Robert Spence, at three o'clock in the morning, and ordered his coachman to have his carriage at the door at four — "I don't mean a quarter, or five minutes, past, but *four;*" and as the clock was striking, Wesley entered the chaise and drove off.

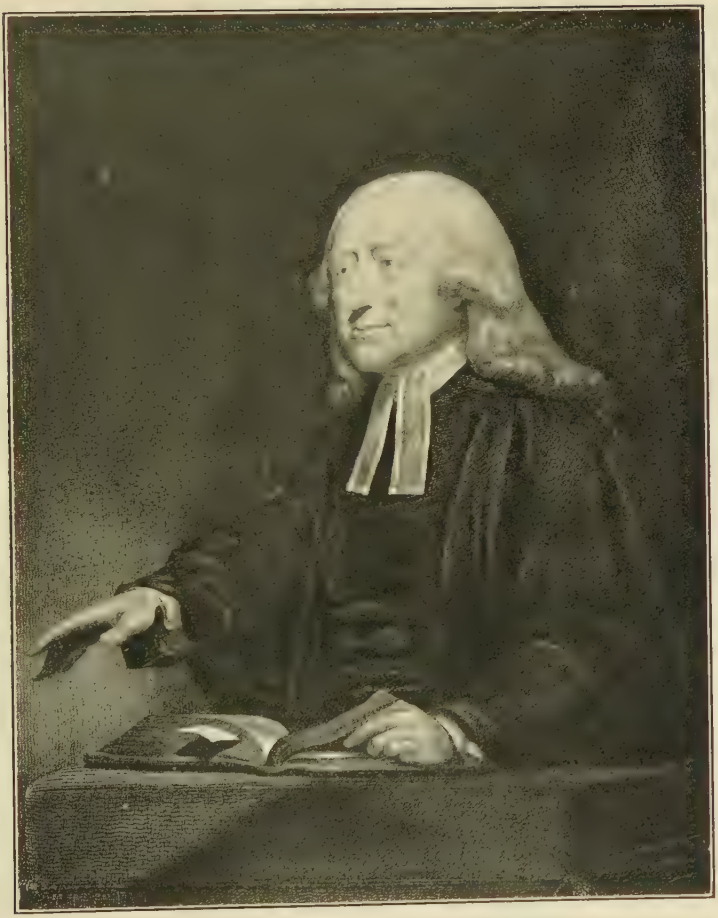
This remarkable preservation of bodily vigor he attributed — and no doubt justly — to his constant life in

the open air, to the absolute regularity of his habits, and to the fact that he had always kept himself free from needless care and anxiety. He was a striking example of the familiar truth that work, without worry, never kills. It was only during the last year and a half of his life that there was any marked decline of his powers. On his last birthday, he writes, without complaint or sadness, but with a quiet recognition of the approaching end: "This day I enter into my eighty-eighth year. For above eighty-six years I found none of the infirmities of age; my eyes did not wax dim, neither was my natural strength abated; but last August I found a sudden change. My eyes were so dim that no glasses would help them. My strength likewise had quite forsaken me, and probably will not return in this world. But I feel no pain from head to foot, only it seems nature is exhausted; and, humanly speaking, will sink more and more till —

"'The weary springs of life stand still at last.'"[1]

Yet he did not lessen his labors. During the year 1790, he made his circuit of England and Wales, preaching in almost every shire, and sometimes riding from thirty to fifty miles in a day. In October, he was in Colchester, and one of his audience there has left an interesting account of his preaching. Henry Crabbe Robinson, then only sixteen years of age, an articled clerk in an attorney's office, heard then for the first time "that veteran in the service of God." Wesley stood in a wide pulpit, on each side of him a minister, and the two held him up. "I looked upon him," says his young hearer in a letter written the next day, "with a respect bordering on enthusiasm. After the people had

[1] Journal, June 28, 1790.



JOHN WESLEY.

From an engraving of the painting by Jackson.

sung one verse of a hymn, he arose and said, 'It gives me great pleasure to find you have not lost your singing. Neither men nor women — you have not forgotten a single note. And I hope that, by the assistance of the same God which enables you to sing well, you may do all other things well.' A universal amen followed. . . . His discourse was short — the text I could not hear. After the last prayer, he rose up and addressed the audience on liberality of sentiment, and spoke much against refusing to join with any congregation on account of differences of opinion. He said, 'If they do but fear God, work righteousness, and keep the Commandments, we have nothing to object to.'"

This young attorney's clerk, as he grew to manhood, came to know and hear most of the great men of two generations in England; but he used to say, never in all his later life had he seen anything comparable to the picture of this aged preacher, with the reverend countenance, the long white locks, and the gentle voice, surrounded by a vast audience of admiring and loving friends, eager to catch some words from the lips so soon to be silent.

Two days later Wesley preached at Lowestoft, and the poet Crabbe, who was in the audience, noted with admiration, the cheerful serenity of his manner and the charm of his voice, as he repeated and applied to himself a favorite passage from Anacreon: —

"Oft am I by woman told,
Poor Anacreon! thou grow'st old:
See, thine hairs are falling all:
Poor Anacreon, how they fall!
Whether I grow old or no,
By these signs I do not know;
But this I need not to be told,
'Tis time to *live*, if I grow old.'"

In the opening weeks of the next year, 1791, he made plans for his usual journey through England, sent his chaise and horses before him to Bristol, and had bespoken seats for himself and his friends in the Bath coach for about the first of March. As late as the 19th of February, it appears from one of his letters that he still hoped to start on the 28th; but on the 25th, which was Sunday, he was so ill as to be quite unable to preach, and was obliged to take to his bed. Next day, however, he was out again; on Tuesday he preached in the City Road Chapel, and on Wednesday preached again at Leatherhead, eighteen miles from London. Thursday he spent quietly with an old friend, Mr. Wolff, at Balham, and seemed as active in mind and cheerful in spirits as ever. It was on this day that he penned, with trembling hand, his last letter. Interested to the end in all measures of public reform, he wrote to William Wilberforce[1] bidding that young champion God-speed in his crusade against human slavery. "Go on," wrote Wesley, "in the name of God and the power of his might, till even American slavery, the vilest that ever saw the sun, shall vanish away before it."

On his return to London next day, Friday, February 25, he repaired to his room in City Road, and never left it again. During the three following days, his strength was fast ebbing, and it was evident that the end was near. He slept much; but he knew the friends who gathered about him in those closing days, and gave directions for his burial and the disposal of his effects. In waking intervals he several times sang some lines

[1] This Letter in his Works (VII, 237) bears the title "To a Friend"; but it is known to have been intended for Wilberforce.

from his brother's hymns, and even in the half dreaming quiet of sleep his failing voice would frame the words of Scripture or hymn, or bid his friends "Pray and praise." On Tuesday afternoon he insisted on sitting up, and while he was assisted to rise broke out into singing, with a strength that astonished his friends: —

> "I'll praise my Maker while I've breath;
> And when my voice is lost in death,
> Praise shall employ my nobler powers;
> My days of praise shall ne'er be past,
> While life, and thought, and being last,
> Or immortality endures."

He sang through two stanzas, and tried to begin a doxology; but the exertion was too much, and he sank back exhausted, faltering as if in benediction, "Now we have done; let us all go." When the widow of Charles Wesley came to his bedside, his eyes already too dim to see her clearly, he strove to draw down her face for a farewell kiss, murmuring, "He giveth his beloved rest." And when she moistened his fevered lips with cold water, he repeated the grace after meat which he had used from childhood: "We thank Thee, O Lord, for this and all Thy mercies. Bless the Church and King, and grant us truth and peace through Jesus Christ our Lord." Once during that afternoon, after trying vainly for some time to make those who stood by his bed understand what he would say, he kept silent for a few moments, and then, gathering all his strength, uttered in a clear, loud voice those words that became a watchword of Methodism, "The best of all is, God is with us"; and after a pause, lifting up his arms, exclaimed again, "The best of all is, God is with us!" Through the following night he was unable to speak, but was heard again and again to mur-

mur the first words of his favorite hymn, "I'll praise, I'll praise." At ten the next morning, Wednesday, March 2, 1791, he opened his eyes, looked round upon the company of friends about him, said distinctly, "Farewell," and was gone.

Some years before, Wesley had caused to be prepared a vault behind the City Road Chapel, for the last resting-place of himself and of such of his itinerants as should die in London. In his will he had directed that his body should be borne to the grave by six poor men, and that at his funeral there should be "no hearse, no coach, no escutcheon, no pomp except the tears of them that loved me." These directions were followed. But by the wish of many of his friends, his body was carried into the City Road Chapel, the day before interment, in his gown and bands, his clerical cap upon his head, and his Bible in his hand. It was noticed that in his last sleep the venerable face still had that expression of cheerful serenity it had worn through life. As many as ten thousand persons passed through the chapel that day to take a last look upon the great leader and the loving friend. The throng was so great, that, in order to avoid the danger of a crowd and confusion, it was thought prudent to have the interment in the early morning, and to issue notices of it only late in the previous evening. Accordingly, the burial service was held between five and six on the morning of March 9; but even at that hour several hundred persons had gathered. The burial office was read by Rev. John Richardson, for thirty years one of Wesley's trusted preachers; and when he instinctively changed one word in the solemn sentence of committal and read,

"Forasmuch as it hath pleased Almighty God to take unto himself the soul of our dear *Father* here departed," the grief of his hearers could no longer be controlled, but broke out into convulsive sobbing and tears.

The quaint inscription on the humble tomb of Wesley declares truly, "This great light arose (by the singular providence of God), to enlighten these nations." When one reflects to-day upon the magnitude of the work he wrought, and considers the extent, the permanence, and the beneficence of his influence, one feels that he might fitly have been given a resting-place in that great abbey which holds the tombs of a score of kings, and dust of better men than kings. Yet it is better as it is. More fitting it is that he should rest, as he does, in the central roar of vast London, in the throng and surge of that mass of common men with whom and for whom he labored, beside that homely chapel which was the centre, and is still the monument, of that great religious movement into which he had poured his life.

CHAPTER IX

THE MAN

It is difficult to picture John Wesley in any other character than that of the religious reformer. True, he conceived his work broadly. He took intelligent interest in all political and philanthropic movements. To his thought, no man was a good Methodist or a good Christian, unless he were a good citizen. But his devotion to the plan of duty he had laid down for himself was so entire and so absorbing, that it left no time for leisure, hardly for reflection. We never see him in an hour of ease. He is always on duty. He too rigidly denied himself those periods of relaxation in which the bent of a man's nature spontaneously asserts itself. We feel, as Samuel Johnson felt, that the man John Wesley will give us no opportunity to make his acquaintance. He is always going somewhere; at the beginning of the month in Cornwall, at the end of it, perhaps, in Yorkshire. It seems a little difficult to get upon easy terms with a man who has always preached two hours ago, and is riding fifteen or twenty miles to preach again to-night. Moreover, Wesley had, as we have seen, no home, no domestic ties, none of those intimate relations in which we may often discern most truly a man's real character. Certain traits of his personality, indeed, stand out prominently enough in any record of his work, — his energy, his remarkable or-

ganizing power, his unbending will, his quiet mastery of men and of circumstances; but to picture him, outside his work, in the narrower relations of society and friendship, in his habit as he lived, this is not so easy.

Yet the reader who has familiarized himself with the details of Wesley's career, and especially with that remarkable record, the Journal, finds the image of the man which slowly shapes itself in his thought, not by any means altogether lacking in clearness. First of all, John Wesley was evidently a gentleman. He made that impression upon every one; upon men of the world and men of religion, upon people of the highest rank and people of the lowest. He had inherited from four generations the instincts of the gentleman, and he carried into all circumstances whither his work led him, however narrow and humble, cultivated tastes and gentle manners. His looks, his bearing, the very tone of his voice, bespoke a certain austere refinement. In dress he was a model of scrupulous neatness and precision. Repeatedly in the record of encounters with mobs he mentions, as if it were a personal injury, that some dirt was thrown on his coat or hat. His one proverb that everybody quotes is, "Cleanliness is next to godliness." A little man, barely five feet six inches in height, and carrying no ounce of superfluous flesh, alert and yet exact in all his movements, with a clear, piercing glance in his hazel eyes, there was always a certain distinction in his manner, that set him apart, at once, from the crowd of men. The best description of his personal appearance in his later years is that given by John Hampson, one of his preachers, who was closely associated with Wesley during the last period of his life.

"The figure of Mr. Wesley was remarkable. His stature was of the lowest, his habit of body in every period of life the reverse of corpulent, and expressive of strict temperance and continual exercise; and, notwithstanding his small size, his step was firm, and his appearance, till within a few years of his death, vigorous and muscular. His face, for an old man, was one of the finest we have seen. A clear, smooth forehead, an aquiline nose, an eye the brightest and the most piercing that can be conceived, and a freshness of complexion scarcely ever to be found at his years and impressive of the most perfect health, conspired to render him a venerable and interesting figure. Few have seen him without being struck with his appearance; and many, who have been greatly prejudiced against him, have been known to change their opinion the moment they were introduced into his presence. In his countenance and demeanor there was a cheerfulness mingled with gravity; a sprightliness which was the natural result of an unusual flow of spirits, and was yet accompanied with every mark of the most serene tranquillity. His aspect, particularly in profile, had a strong character of acuteness and penetration. In dress he was a pattern of neatness and simplicity. A narrow, plaited stock, a coat with small upright collar, no buckles at the knees, no silk or velvet in any part of his apparel, and a head as white as snow, gave an idea of something primitive and apostolical; while an air of neatness and cleanliness was diffused over his whole person." [1]

Wesley had in very eminent degree two qualities that, by common consent, mark the gentleman wherever he

[1] Quoted in Watson's "Life of Wesley," Ch. XIV.

be — courage and courtesy. As for his courage, his life for the twenty years after 1739 is proof enough of that. He was tried in the face of almost every sort of danger; but no peril ever disturbed his absolute coolness. His courtesy was of the finest sort, which I take to be democratic. He had the respect of an English Conservative for social distinctions, and he numbered among his friends and correspondents men of the highest rank in England. Nor was he by any means insensible to the charm of art and manners and converse in a truly refined society; and few men were better fitted by breadth of knowledge and keenness of intelligence to share in such society. "Love," he used to say, "supplies the essentials of good breeding without the aid of a dancing master." But his life-work was mostly to be done with and for the great middle class. And in his courtesy he knew no social distinctions. Uniformly affable, with a gentleness of manner rather surprising when joined with a temper so firm and masterful, his bearing was a model of genuine courtesy. England had no truer gentleman in his century than John Wesley. He never thought it needful to vulgarize his message before any audience, or to make any concessions to coarseness. On the other hand, he never held himself above his hearers, or gave himself any superior or distant airs. He talked with a mechanic or a tradesman as he talked with a lord. One of his preachers noticed that he was always especially careful to take off his hat whenever poor people thanked him for anything. He knew how to turn a compliment very neatly, and, if need be, to blend a rebuke with it. He was lunching one day with one of his preachers at the table of a gentleman whose daughter was noted for her

beauty. The tactless preacher, noticing that the young lady wore more rings than he could approve, bluntly took her hand and turning to Wesley, said, "What do you think of this, Mr. Wesley, for a Methodist's hand?" With a quiet smile for the lady, Wesley replied, "I think the hand is very beautiful, sir."

It may be admitted that there were some traits of his character that tended to give it distinction and dignity, rather than charm. Something of his early asceticism survived all his days, and he perhaps denied himself somewhat too strictly the amenities of life. Then, too, though it is not true, as is sometimes said, that his temperament was cold, he did have it under perfect control. He was the most self-possessed of men. He had no moods, no unregulated impulses. He never let himself go. He was not the man to fling his inkstand at the devil. He never hurried, never worried; his life was a pattern of order and precision. Now such an equable temper is doubtless to be coveted, but it certainly does not give that light and shade which make character interesting. And a man may very possibly have too much poise to be a thoroughly genial and sympathetic companion.

Then, so far as appears from his life or his writings, Wesley had very little gift of humor; which is a serious privation in our dull-colored world. He was cheerful — that came of his temperament — and he had a very pretty wit, usually with a satiric edge, and shown best in some mood of criticism or controversy. You expect wit from every man of any eminence in the eighteenth century. But of that sympathetic enjoyment of all the manifold contrasts and incongruities of life which we call humor, I think Wesley had very little. That

usually implies a habit of leisurely observation, which he would never indulge. It is a pity, when one thinks what an opportunity he had for the exercise of that fortunate gift. The great middle class of English people, the class full of the most varied, racy, humorous life, Wesley knew, or might have known, better than all the novelists of that century put together. He lived with them for fifty years, was their friend, adviser, father confessor. But you would never guess that he saw the humors of their life. There were thousands of Mrs. Poysers among those early Methodists, — there must have been, — or the Wesleyan movement wouldn't have been so sane and healthy; but Wesley never seems to have met them. The infrequent passages of conscious humor in the Journal almost always have some satiric quality; it is Wesley the controversialist who is speaking. "I talked with a warm man who was always very zealous for the Church when he was very drunk, and just able to stammer out 'No gown, no crown.' He was quickly persuaded that, whatever *we* were, he was himself a child of the devil. We left him full of good resolutions, which lasted several days."

Perhaps a consciousness of such a tendency to unwarranted satire made Wesley a little fearful of humor. When the Bishop of Exeter in his scandalous attack charged him with having formed a resolution not to indulge in laughter, Wesley replied, "No, nor ought I to indulge in it at all if I am conscious to myself that it hurts my soul." But there is a laughter that doeth good like a medicine; I do not think a little more of it would have hurt the soul of John Wesley. Certainly it might have been good for his writings. The Journal, as it is, is one of the most interesting books of the cen-

tury; but if Wesley could have put into it the humor of that genial old hero, his father, rector of Epworth, the Journal might have been, like Boswell's "Johnson," a book that no intelligent man could leave unread. But John Wesley was the child of his mother; and humor was not one of the many gifts the great Susannah Wesley could bequeath to her son.

As it is, almost the only humorous passages in the Journal are those Wesley himself never suspected of humor. For instance, he set down gravely these statements on the same page: —

"Saturday, Feb. 2. Having received a full answer from Mr. P., I was clearly resolved that I ought to marry. For many years I remained single because I believed I could be more useful in a single than in a married state. I now as fully believed that in my present circumstances I might be more useful in a married state; into which I entered a few days after."

"Wed. Feb. 6., I met the single men and showed them on how many accounts it was good for those who had received that gift from God to remain single for the kingdom of heaven's sake." There is no indication that he felt this homily to the young preachers humorously ill-timed.

On one occasion when he was riding with a number of friends from one preaching place to another, the party was assailed by a mob, who pelted the carriage with stones; but, says Wesley, "a very large gentlewoman sat in my lap and screened me, so that nothing came near me." What special providence screened the large gentlewoman, he doesn't say. First and last, there are a good number of delightful passages like these, in which, if the humor *is* intentional, it is "extra dry."

It is not exaggeration to call Wesley a scholar. Not, indeed, that he could present the modern credentials of scholarship. He was not deeply versed in any special department of knowledge. He discovered no new scientific or historic facts; he wrote none of those dry books of learning which nobody ever reads. But he was a scholar of the old school — a man of literary tastes, of broad outlook, and genuine culture. He could stand Macaulay's test of a scholar — he could read Greek with his feet on the fender. It is easy to see in the Journal how keen was his interest in all things of the intellect and the imagination, not only in theology and philosophy, but in history, poetry, art. To use one of Matthew Arnold's pet phrases, he wanted to know the best that had been thought and done in the world. Never was so tireless a reader, though he spent little time within the four walls of a library. Whenever he travelled, whether on horseback or by coach, a book was always open before him. Nobody could adopt more truly Cicero's famous praise of books, "*Delectant domi, non impediunt foris, pernoctant nobiscum, peregrinantur, rusticantur.*" Books were, indeed, almost his only companions in his lonely and wandering life. In his constant and wearisome labors, mostly with and for people of scanty ideas and narrow horizon, he found refreshment and inspiration in the world's masterpieces of literature. One week he has read again Homer's "Odyssey," and breaks out in a fine burst of admiration for the charm of its imagery and the nobility of its morals; another day, while riding to Newcastle, he reads the tenth book of the "Iliad"; another time it is a book of the "Æneid" or the "Letters" of Cicero. He was familiar not only

with the great works of his own literature, but with those of the Greek, Latin, Italian, French, German, and he had a good reading knowledge of Spanish. Among the authors of classic rank whom he mentions in the Journal — and that not merely by a word of quotation or an incidental reference, but in a way to indicate that he was actually reading them at the time or had long been familiar with them — are Homer, Plato, Xenophon, Demosthenes, Anacreon; Lucian, Virgil, Cicero, Juvenal, Horace; Ariosto, Tasso; Voltaire, Rousseau; Shakespeare, Milton, Cowley, Dryden, Locke, Pope, Swift, Prior, Young, Thomson, Gray, Sterne, Johnson, Ossian. And this is by no means a complete list. His own incidental comments upon books and authors are always independent and often very shrewd and curious. In his tastes he was emphatically a man of the eighteenth century; but he accepted the mandate of no critical authority.

As to the shelfful of volumes, some thirty in number, that he himself wrote, most of them are doubtless destined to oblivion. He was not raised up to write books. There is a virile strength and plainness in some of his sermons which many readers will say entitle them to rank with the works of Sherlock or Tillotson. But sermons, at best, are not a very vital form of literature, and it is to be doubted whether Wesley's will find many readers outside of those Methodists who still prize them as a body of sound doctrine. The truth is, Wesley had not that union of imagination and passion and that special gift of phrase which make writing literature. He was rather afraid of anything that might seem like affectation or ornament; his own style, in sermon, essay, or pamphlet, is clear, direct,

and entirely plain. His model was Swift, in whose style, he says, all the properties of a good writer meet; but, unlike Swift, he cannot illumine his page with constant play of illustration, indignant, pathetic, or humorous. Wesley only speaks right on. His critical taste in matters of phrase was severe, almost finical. His nicer judgment corrected many a careless or extravagant line in the hymns of his brother Charles; and his own translations of the Moravian hymns, though sometimes bald, are always dignified.

One of Wesley's books, however, is immortal. Like so many men in those days when the world was not in such a hurry, he kept a journal. Indeed, he was so thoroughly convinced of the value of this practice, that he used to enjoin it upon all his preachers, and the best of their efforts were sometimes honored with a place in his *Arminian Magazine*. Wesley's own Journal certainly does not lack much of being the most interesting social document of the eighteenth century. For it is not so much the story of Wesley's inner life as the record of his dealings with other people. This precise and masterful little man in dark clothing goes riding up and down the country for forty years, and he has eyes that open outward. He knows all sorts and conditions of men; he is interested in all things that go to make up the daily life of men. He examines a society of colliers in some grimy little Yorkshire village, on the state of their souls, and then he goes to his room and writes a letter to Lord Dartmouth or Lord North on the state of the nation. He knows this England; for plain people talk with him. They tell him not only of their religious doubts and fears and joys; they tell him of the injustice of the squire and the arrogance of

the parson, of the drunkenness at the public house, of the failure of the crops and the high price of bread, of the burden of the taxes and the unpopularity of the ministry. Boswell and Walpole will introduce you to the literary and the fashionable folk of that century; but if you want to know that great, pushing English middle class, coarse often almost to brutality, yet serious and inclined to be religious, the men who really did the work and paid the debts and fought the battles of England, — if you want to know these men, read Wesley's Journal. You will see them as they appeared to one bent, first of all, on saving their souls; but you will see them as they were. For here the sturdy simplicity of Wesley's style is admirable. In its homely realism the Journal is as vivid as Hogarth.

Only such portions of the Journal have been printed as seemed to Wesley good for edification. The complete manuscript still exists, in twenty-six bound volumes, and it were greatly to be wished that it might be given to the public entire. It is certain that the unpublished parts must contain matter of great interest, both for the fuller revelation of Wesley's own character, and for the illustration of the society and religion of his day. And we may be quite sure that —

> "Whatever record leap to light
> He never shall be shamed."

As a thinker, Wesley was the child of his age. He had all the eighteenth-century confidence in sense and reason. Although it was his mission to bring new warmth and light to the religious life of England, yet he shared the general distrust of enthusiasm; of any conduct that could not be defended by reason. After

he emerged from the early influence of the mysticism of Law and the quietism of the Moravians, he had little patience with any religious faith that could not give a clear account of itself. The title of his famous apology indicates exactly his attitude toward all serious criticism, "An Appeal to Men of Reason and Religion." He always professed himself ready to abandon any position and disclaim any teaching that could not safely make such appeal. We shall remember his exclamation quoted on a previous page, "The reproach of Christ I am willing to bear; but not the reproach of enthusiasm — if I can help it!" Not infrequently in the Journal he expresses dissatisfaction with some members of his societies, — not on account of irregularities in their conduct or lack of pronounced emotional experience, but because their faith seems so unintelligent. A great part of his thinking and writing was prompted by the desire to give a clear rationale of the religious life. Himself a logician from the cradle, he was accustomed all his life long to give reasoned justification for his belief and his conduct; and he insisted that other people should do the same. Mr. Lecky hardly puts it too strongly when he says that Wesley manifested at all times and on all subjects an even exaggerated passion for reasoning. No controversialist of the century had more respect for an argument. In his own mental processes, as in his outward habits, he had schooled himself to order and method. His ideas were as carefully arranged as the papers on his writing-table. His sermons, read to-day, without the strange power of his voice and presence, may seem to lack breadth and color; he sticks narrowly to his subject, and he has not the imagination to illumine or to

illustrate it. But he is always terse, consecutive, logical. It is evident that he is not striving to awaken any unintelligent feelings; his speech could never have been sensational in manner or hazy in thought.

It may be said with truth that Wesley was a little too deferential to a syllogism. He forgot that on most matters of importance our conclusions are not the result of a single line of argument, but the resultant of many lines; nay, in many cases, cannot be decided exclusively by argument, but rather by sentiment or instinct. His very confidence in logic made him overready to revise or reverse any accredited opinions that seemed to be contradicted by a correct course of argument. On historical and scientific questions he was liable to be the prey of the last plausibly reasoned book he had read. We have seen how easily he was convinced by Johnson's "Taxation no Tyranny." He reads "An Enquiry into the Proofs of the Charges Commonly Advanced against Mary Queen of Scots," and he is convinced that Mary was an innocent martyr and Elizabeth "as just and merciful as Nero, and as good a Christian as Mahomet." He reads Woodrow's "History of the Sufferings of the Church in Scotland," and he pronounces Charles II a monster, and Bloody Mary of England "a lamb, a mere dove in comparison with him" — a judgment about equally unjust to both monarchs. A tract by a Dr. Wilson on the "Circulation of the Blood" persuades him that the heart is a mere vessel to receive the blood, "which moves through its channels on the mere principle of suction, assisted by the ethereal fire."

Yet this easy surrender to a line of clear reasoning is a fault that implies some important virtues. John

Wesley was the most candid of men. Seldom has a great religious reformer been so little of a dogmatist, or shown so little stubborn persistence in his own views, simply because they were his own. And this is the more remarkable when it is remembered that this openness to persuasion was joined with a will as inflexible as iron. Moreover, with his direct and logical cast of thought, it was impossible that his opinions should be doubtful or befogged; that he should let his emotions run away with his reason; that he should ever maintain at the same time two logically inconsistent opinions.

It was a worse fault in his thinking that, in his liking for a good course of syllogism, Wesley sometimes neglected to inquire very carefully what had been put into the premises of his syllogism. He was curious and inquisitive, but he had not in any high degree the gift of scientific observation. Nor did he reason from facts to laws and causes very correctly; his deduction was much better than his induction. He has been often charged with credulity, and not without some good reason. The charge may easily be exaggerated. Naturally he was sceptical rather than credulous; he was not usually ready to accept facts on dubious testimony. He shared the critical temper of his age. His comments on the legendary element in early history and on contemporary books of travel, as one of his biographers remarks,[1] often anticipate the criticism of recent students. Moreover, some of the incidents often cited from the Journal as examples of his credulity, seem rather proofs of consistency; as when he expresses gratitude that a cloud slipped over the sun just as its

[1] J. H. Rigg, "The Living Wesley," p. 240.

rays became intolerably hot on his bare head, or that the rain suddenly ceased as he was about to address an audience of several thousand people in the open air. To assert dogmatically that these coincidences were proof of special divine interposition in his behalf, would certainly have been arrogant; but Wesley did not assert that. On the other hand, if a man really believed — what many profess and do not believe — that there are no accidents whatever in the government of the universe, he may as reasonably deny accident to trifles like these as to the catastrophe that engulfs a city. Before a universal Providence, distinctions of great and small vanish. Most of us act as if we thought the Almighty, like the physician in the next street, did not bother himself about our little ailments and vexations, but might be induced to take concern in a serious case of typhoid or a critical surgical operation — which I take to be a kind of pagan notion.

> "When the loose mountain trembles from on high
> Will gravitation cease as you go by?"

asks Pope, with an air of triumph. Why, no; yet if gravitation be only an exercise of that omniscient Will without whose knowledge not a sparrow falls, I may not irrationally hope that gravitation will wait till I am past — and be thankful.

But there are other and better grounds for this charge of credulity against Wesley. Credulous in one direction, he certainly was. All his life long he gave too easy assent to anything that savored of the preternatural, to stories of dreams, visions, second-sight, ghosts, witchcraft. His interest in such matters was abnormally excited when he was a boy by the noises in his father's rectory. Those mysterious knockings

and trampings and lifting of latches and moving of furniture fixed in the mind of young Wesley an unalterable belief in unseen beings that may invade our human life. His rational temper was not content to leave any mystery unexplained; and he found no other explanation. He always showed a curiosity, not morbid but eager, in any accounts of the presence or influence of invisible powers. He emphatically expressed his opinion that to give up witchcraft was in effect to give up the Bible — a dilemma that I trust we need not accept. From the Journal might be gathered an admirable collection of tales of wonder, varying from the simplest cases of thought transference to the most delightfully creepy ghost stories. A few of them are too lurid to be convincing; but the most of them, it must be admitted, are well enough attested to deserve examination by the Society for Psychical Research. In nearly every instance they were doubtless believed by the good people who told them. Wesley himself, though often careful to say he does not impose his own belief upon any one else, certainly did not always make a careful scrutiny of these tales before accepting them. He gives one particularly astounding — and entertaining — narrative, ten pages long, of a young woman who was visited by the ghost of her uncle and by a considerable number of other spirits, whose chamber, in fact, seems to have been a kind of popular resort for all her departed friends; and to this tale Wesley fits a very odd series of comments, queries, and inferences of his own as to the behavior of the ghosts, which would hardly satisfy the requirements of strict scientific investigation.[1]

[1] Journal, May 25, 1768.

We may at least credit him with being slow to admit any evidence of the marvellous that had not come under his personal observation. He was interested in the literature of the preternatural, but he was not generally convinced by it. Glanvill's "Saducismus Triumphatus" he thought mostly "stark nonsense"; while as to Swedenborg, he concludes that he was "one of the most ingenious, lively, entertaining madmen that ever put pen to paper." And before we condemn Wesley in too superior fashion for his credulity, we may remember that the most hard-headed philosopher of that age, Samuel Johnson, shared the belief in ghosts, and could make an appointment to meet one in the crypt of St. Sepulchre's Church. We may remember, too, that there *is* a well-attested body of phenomena not yet explained, which it may not be worth while to investigate, but which candid men do not deny with contempt. Wesley's interest in such matters, in fact, is perhaps not exactly a proof of credulity, but rather of a singular curiosity with reference to whatever lies on the border-land of experience. One thinks of it as an extension beyond scientific limits, and not guarded by any scientific temper or methods, of that intense interest in all unfamiliar physical facts which led him to read with avidity the records of chemical and physical experiment, and to follow eagerly the new science of electricity. Most of all, we must insist that this vein of credulity with reference to the preternatural did not vitiate his thinking on other matters, and that he did not allow it to sanction any vagaries of conduct either in himself or any one else. It might have been thought that such an interest in Wesley would have encouraged superstition in his followers; but there is no proof that

it did. For, after all, we must come back to the assertion that Wesley's nature was at bottom rational — not speculative, but practical. He might give rein to his conjecture in the realm of the unknown, and explain what he thought strange facts by wilder theories; but all his operative and efficient beliefs, like a child of the eighteenth century, he brought rigidly to the tests of sense and conduct.

In one other respect, Wesley's character is curiously illustrative of the spirit of the age. Everybody knows that in England, as everywhere else in Europe, at about the middle of the eighteenth century, the dominant critical reason, largely aristocratic and scholarly, began to be modified by a romantic sentimentality, largely democratic and popular. The era of Pope and Voltaire was passing; the era of Rousseau was beginning. In England this democratic and sentimental impulse manifests itself in various ways. Literature, emerging from the clubs and drawing-rooms of Queen Anne society, throws off the restraints of convention to gain freer utterance for personal feeling. In poetry, melancholy becomes a favorite motive, sometimes gentle and chastened, as in Goldsmith and Gray, sometimes rhetorical and sonorous, as in Young and Blair. In fiction, Fielding well represents English common sense; but Fielding's depictions of burly, red-blooded life, healthy though coarse, were far less popular than Richardson's portrayals of tortured, long-suffering sentiment. And Sterne, the apostle of sentimentality, was, for a time, a greater favorite than either. Popular religious literature, appealing to a less cultivated taste, often shows this sentimentality in its most dishevelled form. The most widely circulated book in England at

the middle of the century was not poetry or fiction, but the "Meditations among the Tombs" of Wesley's college friend, James Hervey. The reader of to-day who looks into it will probably be surprised to find it the most rhetorical of books, written in a tone of unctuous pathos, very unedifying.

Now it is curious to find in Wesley this strain of sentimentalism grafted upon an essentially critical temperament. Of course we shall not expect from his dignified self-possession anything extravagant or unrestrained; but with his precise and reasoning temper there certainly was combined a strongly contrasted vein of sentiment. This may be seen in the series of attachments which ended in his unlucky marriage; but a more interesting and equally convincing proof of it is found in the comments upon books and authors with which the Journal abounds. Some of these are very suggestive of the trend of his taste. He shared the universal and just admiration of his age for Pope; but significantly the one poem of Pope with which he was most familiar was not pointed satire or epigrammatic philosophy, but Pope's one piece of elegant sentimentalism, the "Elegy on an Unfortunate Lady." This he quotes again and again, and remarks once that it has long been a favorite of his. It was not Pope, however, that, of all the Queen Anne men, Wesley admired most, but rather Prior. He quotes him repeatedly in the Journal; and when Samuel Johnson, in the newly issued "Lives of the Poets," spoke in terms of depreciation both of Prior's character and of his verse, Wesley, then in his eightieth year, came to the defence of his favorite poet in a most spirited paper.[1]

[1] The *Arminian Magazine*, 1782.

Prior, he asserts, was not half so bad a man as his critics have painted him; while as to the Chloe of the charming lyrics, who had been represented as no better than she should be, Wesley declares on the authority of his brother Samuel, who knew her well, that she was an estimable Miss Taylor of Westminster, who refused the advances of the poet while he was living, and spent hours weeping at his tomb after he was dead. Johnson's criticism of Prior's verse provokes his warmest protest. The great critic had said it lacks feeling. "Does it?" cries Wesley, "then I know not with what eyes or with what heart a man must read it." Prior's "Henry and Emma," a rather frigid version of the "Nut-brown Maid" story, he avers to be a poem that "no man of sensibility can read without tears." Similar expressions of preference for the sentimental and romantic elements in literature are very frequent throughout the Journal. Of Thomson's poetry, for instance, he had never thought very highly till he read his romantic tragedy of "Edward and Eleonora," by which, he says, he was much impressed. Beattie, whose almost forgotten work, "The Minstrel," is an attempt to give a romantic flavor to the warmed-over philosophy of Pope, he pronounces one of the best of poets — an opinion shared, it is said, by King George III. Home's sentimental and declamatory drama of "Douglas," now remembered only by the lines —

> "My name is Norval: on the Grampian hills
> My father feeds his flocks,"

he is astonished to find "one of the most excellent dramas I ever read" — and he had read a good many. The grandiose declamation of "Ossian," which excited only the contempt of Johnson, he pronounces deeply

pathetic, "little inferior to Homer and Virgil, and in some respects superior to both." After reading Voltaire's "Henriade," which he praises generously, he remarks that the French language, for all its finish and precision, lacks pathos and heartiness, and is no more to be compared with the German or Spanish than is a bagpipe to an organ. Of contemporary fiction, there is no evidence that he ever read either Fielding or Richardson, but it is significant to note his familiarity with that incarnation of sentimentalism, Sterne. Of the "Sentimental Journey" he writes, "'Sentimental' — what is that? It is not English: he might as well say 'continental.' It is not sense. It conveys no determinate idea. Yet this nonsensical word is now become a fashionable one. However, the book agrees well with the title, for one is as queer as the other. For oddity, uncouthness, and unlikeness to all the world beside, I suppose the writer to be without a rival" — an account so very just as to make it certain he had read the book. The "Tristram Shandy," too, he must have read, for he points an argument in one of his pamphlets by an adroit reference to it. He never wrote a novel himself, — he wrote almost everything else, — but he did, as stated in a previous chapter, revise and abridge one that he greatly admired, and recommended it to Methodist readers. Henry Brooke's "Fool of Quality" would doubtless be voted insipid by the modern novel reader; but Wesley was fascinated by its profuse sentiment. "The greatest excellence in this book," says he, "is that it continually strikes at the heart. The strokes are so fine, so natural and affecting, that I know not who can read it with tearless eyes." Most readers of to-day will be able to control their emotions through the

perusal; but Wesley's remark is another of the many proofs scattered through the Journal, that his usual good judgment was always liable to be misled by this indulgence to sentiment. Possibly, however, this sympathy with the trend of his age was one cause of the vast influence of Wesley; he had the *Zeitgeist* on his side.

But all this does not explain Wesley's wonderful mastery over men. For he was born to command, if ever man was — a leader and ruler from his earliest years. And rule he did, as a great religious reformer seldom has. The whole vast organization of Methodism depended upon him as its source and centre. He was absolute commander of the army of itinerant preachers; he was the judge who finally decided all cases of conduct or discipline; he had the power to admit or to exclude every member of every Methodist society in the United Kingdom. With literal truth he might have adopted the language of the centurion, "I say unto this man, Go, and he goeth; and to another, Come, and he cometh; and to my servant, Do this, and he doeth it." And this authority was quietly assumed by Wesley, and accepted by the thousands who loved and obeyed him, as a matter of course, a natural and inevitable result of their relation. Wesley apparently made no effort to secure or to maintain it. When, now and then, a man revolted against his leadership, such malcontents found it necessary to leave the societies. But the bitterness of the few who rebelled and the loyalty of the thousands who obeyed alike attest Wesley's consummate power of command. Such gift of personal sway is granted to but few men. Impelled by selfish motives, it might have made a leader eminent in poli-

tics or in war. In fact, it is probably safe to say that of all the great generals in the Europe of his century, no one could claim such an army of devoted followers as this man John Wesley.

What gave him such power? Tireless and unselfish devotion to the welfare of men will secure their respect, often their love; not always their obedience. Doubtless no analysis can explain the secret of personality; but one essential there is without which such mastery over men as Wesley's is impossible. He had an iron will. Quiet, soft-spoken, gentle in manner, holding himself perfectly in command, there was yet a strange dominance in his personality. Even his friends sometimes stood in a certain awe of him, and seldom ventured to oppose his wishes. There was nothing imperious or arrogant in his temper, but he seemed to overcome opposition by sheer force of will. He could overawe a mob with the still and searching look of his eye. A recent thoughtful writer on religious phenomena[1] suggests that the remarkable effects of his preaching — which, unlike Whitefield's, was not sensational either in theme or in manner — may have been due in part to this power of intense personal will which we do not yet clearly understand.

Certain it is that this concentrated and persistent power of will largely explains the success of all Wesley's practical plans. He is often credited, and justly, with remarkable powers of organization. Yet he invented little. His whole system was not devised beforehand; it was not a scheme, but a growth. Almost every one of its features, as we have seen in tracing its history,

[1] F. M. Davenport, "Primitive Traits in Religious Revivals," pp. 168–169.

was adopted by Wesley as a means ready to his hand for the transmission or extension of his own superintendence. It is not the Wesleyan system, but Wesley that calls for our admiration. Almost any organization may be efficient, if you have a powerful man to administer it. His plan once formed, Wesley was as steadfast as the sun and as sure as the seasons. He was never discouraged, never impatient at the slowness of results. There was no vacillation or reversal in his purpose, nothing spasmodic or fitful in his activity; but for fifty years, with fixed, unswerving will, he wrought out his mission. He met every exigency as it arose, adapted old means to new ends, or, when convinced that it was necessary, with quick decision, though reluctantly, cut whatever tie of tradition thwarted or fettered the work he felt called to do. Where else can there be found a religious movement with results so widespread and permanent, directed so entirely by one man, without influential friends and in spite of formidable opposition, and bearing the impress of his personality in all its doctrines, its methods, and its spirit? To Wesley's keen, practical sagacity, driven by such quiet energy of will, nothing was impossible. He had the gift to achieve.

But it is the peculiar glory of Wesley that this dominating will was joined with an almost absolutely unselfish benevolence. The combination is by no means usual. For no temptations are so subtle or so strong as those that accompany the consciousness of superior power. The great general or statesman is always liable to have a little contempt for the masses whose wills are so pliant to his own. The masters of men are seldom the lovers of men. But it would be

difficult to find a man in history whose motives were more purely altruistic than Wesley's. Even the few malcontents who complained of his rule as autocratic or arrogant, never ventured to accuse him of using his authority to further his private interests or gain. At worst they only charged him with the ambitious love of power for its own sake. And no one reads his life to-day without seeing how false was that charge. Ambition, in any bad sense, he had none. It was not power he wanted, but influence and opportunity. The world was his parish, and he wanted to get at men everywhere on the common level of human needs and human destiny. All his plans and machinery had this one end in view.

And his benevolence was remarkably sane, clear-sighted, practical. There was no effusiveness, no sentimentality about it. It is evident enough from the Journal that the gentleman and the scholar in him often shrank instinctively from the coarseness and ignorance of those to whom he brought his message. If, as one writer[1] has said, his greatest service was not to the Church, but to democracy, he was himself by native inclination conservative and aristocratic. He had no illusions about the people in the lower stratum of English society; he knew them for just what they were — ignorant, often coarse, brutalized. But he had no contempt for them and no despair. He did not philosophize much over the problems of society, either with the sociologist or the theologian; he only knew that at the root of most of the real ills of life was the fact of sin; and from sin he knew men could be saved. To induce them to accept that salvation was the deep, steady, dominating passion of his life.

[1] F. M. Davenport.

For the first and the last word with reference to John Wesley must be that he was a man of religion. The deepest secret of his success was his faith in God. Without love of man, such a life of unselfish devotion would indeed have been impossible; but without faith in God, this love of man, even in the bravest souls, may lead in such a world as this to despairing pessimism. We must add faith to our love, or we shall lose our hope. Wesley firmly believed that God would, and that, therefore, man could, mend and lift up this bad and broken world. He believed that every human heart, however encased in worldly conventions or sunk in grosser sins, is accessible to the divine grace; that every man will feel some impulse of response to the divine message of warning and love, if only he can be induced to listen to it. And so, not with a sudden flare of youthful enthusiasm, but with a steadfast, lifelong resolution, he gave himself to the work of winning men to righteousness, from the love of sin to the love of God. It was this faith in God and the resulting confidence in the spiritual possibilities of humanity that inspired his unflagging energy and lifted his life to the calm levels of heroism.

And Wesley had little confidence in any other means to uplift and direct mankind, apart from this force of personal religion. It is true, as we have seen, that he was in advance of his age in his advocacy of measures to improve the moral and physical conditions of society; it may perhaps be true, as the most brilliant of recent English historians[1] has said, that the noblest result of the Wesleyan movement was "the steady attempt, which has never ceased from that day to this,

[1] J. R. Green, "Short History of the English People."

to remedy the guilt, the ignorance, the physical suffering, the social degradation of the profligate and the poor." Yet we must insist that the Wesleyan movement was distinctively a religious revival. Wesley was no believer in salvation by education and culture, by economic and social reform. He accepted the declaration of the Master, "Ye must be born again." He did assert most positively — as the Master did — that a genuine religious life must be known by its fruit in outward conduct, and would admit no man to be a good Christian who was not also a good citizen. But he was convinced that the truly righteous life, the life that realizes the best possibilities of human nature, must spring from that devout love to God which changes and directs and controls all a man's desires; and he knew that such a life is inspired and nurtured by influences supernatural and divine. Philanthropist, social reformer, he was first of all, and always, the preacher of personal religion.

He was not a perfect man, and his followers then and since then have perhaps often idealized him. Yet among religious reformers where is there a nobler figure, a purer example of a life hospitable to truth, fostering culture, yet subordinating all aspiration, directing all culture, to the unselfish service of humanity? It were idle to ask whether he were the greatest man of his century. That century was rich in names the world calls great — great generals like Marlborough, great monarchs like Frederick, great statesmen like Chatham and Burke, poets and critics like Pope and Johnson and Lessing, writers who helped revolutionize society like Voltaire and Rousseau; but run over the whole brilliant list, and where among them all is the man whose

motives were so pure, whose life was so unselfish, whose character was so spotless. And where among them all is the man whose influence — social, moral, religious — was productive of such vast good and of so little evil, as that exerted by this plain man who exemplified himself, and taught thousands of his fellow-men to know, what the religion of Jesus Christ really means!

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